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ABSTRACT

This report describes a study to provide a picture of the stage of development, level, and nature of the debate on nonformal learning in Greece. It describes the national debate on questions of identification, assessment, and recognition of nonformal learning, including means, motives, and areas of agreement and conflict. Then, it describes existing and proposed methodologies and systems based on viewpoints and debates involving stakeholders. Links between initiatives related to nonformal learning assessment and the national qualification standards/framework are explored, and reference is made to areas of importance and concern. Finally, effectiveness, legitimacy, and validity of existing methods and experiences are assessed, including issues of mobility and visibility. Gaps and weaknesses are highlighted, and reflections on the future are expressed. Findings indicate that the past 3-4 years have witnessed the beginning of an awareness and interest by social partners and the government in Greece to issues related to identification, assessment, and recognition of nonformal learning. There is evidence of an initial level of dialogue on the issue but no coordinated integrated approach. Interest in the issues around nonformal learning focus essentially on recognition of nonformal vocational training and regulation over time of certain professions and trades, in a piecemeal and limited way, with inconsistent outcomes. (Contains a 21-item bibliography.) (YLB)



European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

PANORAMA

Identification,

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recognition of

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Identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning in Greece

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Breakthrough

December 1999

on behalf of
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INTRODUCTION

This report is part of the CEDEFOP project on 'Identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning' initiated in 1997. In the three years since the start of the project, studies covering a majority of Member States of the European Union (EU) and the European Economic Area (EEA) have been conducted (Luxembourg and Iceland have not been covered so far). A synthesis report summing up and analysing the results from these reports, 'The changing institutional and political role of non-formal learning: European tendencies' (CEDEFOP 2000), has also been produced. The objectives of this project are:

- To identify to what degree methodologies for the identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning have been introduced in the respective countries.
- To identify how methodologies for the identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning are integrated into and supported by existing institutions and systems.
- To analyse the political context surrounding the introduction of methodologies and systems.

The current report on Greece is one of the most interesting contributions to this project. Building on information from a broad selection of informants from both public and private sectors, the report gives a good picture of existing work as well as on attitudes towards the introduction of methodologies and systems in the area. While still not very advanced in actual developments, Greece can be looked upon as becoming increasingly conscious of the importance of competences developed outside formal education and training. In this respect, Greece can be compared with other Mediterranean countries like Italy, Spain and Portugal. These countries (or at least certain regions of these countries), build on a much weaker tradition in the area of vocational education and training than is the case in most of northern Europe. Only recently, over the last decade or so, have initiatives been taken to remedy this. The relative weakness of the formal vocational education and training system has established non-formal learning (in particular through work experience), as the domineering form of (vocational) competence reproduction and renewal. This means, and is probably of specific importance in Greece, the southern regions of Italy, and the less developed areas of Spain and Portugal, that a vast reservoir of non-formal, experienced-based competences exists. If this reservoir is going to be 'tapped' and if it is going to be renewed (quantitatively and qualitatively), then it is necessary to identify and assess its strengths and weaknesses. The quality of competences based on non-formal learning cannot and should not be taken for granted. Proper systems for identification and assessment could be one way to face this quality problem. Perhaps more than is the case in northern Europe, this situation illustrates the need for identification and assessment of non-formal learning. Although building on relatively weak traditions in the field of vocational education and training, in some cases facing a deep-rooted underrating of vocational competences in general, and non-formal vocational competences in particular, a growing willingness towards change can be observed. Throughout the last decade, all four countries have been reforming their vocational education and training systems and

specifically Spain and Italy are now entering the decisive stages of these reforms. The four countries, despite their common challenges, have treated the methodological and institutional aspects in different ways and with varying degrees of commitment and intensity. As illustrated in the report, Greece still has a way to go in this respect.

The focus on non-formal learning reflects what we can characterise as a broader approach to learning. Learning, vocational or otherwise, should not be looked upon as something exclusively limited to formal settings. Formal education and training cannot be substituted by non-formal learning, it can however be supplemented. Developing methodologies and systems for the identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning should be looked upon as ways of realising such supplementation. In our opinion, the Greek outlook appears promising and open to future development in this field.

Thessaloniki, February 2000

Stavrou Stavros

Deputy Director

Jens Bjørnåvold

Project manager

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SUMMARY

non-formal learning: identification, assessment and recognition (Greece)

INTRODUCTION

Aim

The aim of this study is to provide a picture of the stage of development, level and nature of the debate on non-formal learning in Greece-identification, assessment and recognition. In addition to reflections on current practice as to how far current methodologies are valid, reliable and accepted, the study brings forward the positions and recommendations of the government, social partners and relevant private and public bodies, at sectoral, regional and national levels.

Methodology

The study has been carried out using a combination of methods of primary and secondary research. Information and views have been gathered through:

- existing official documentation, studies, reports, evaluations;
- questionnaires and interviews completed with key national and sectoral bodies and social partners;
- formal round table discussion between government and social partners.

Content

The report begins by providing a picture of the national debate encompassing questions of identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning in Greece, including means and motives, areas of agreement and conflict. It goes on to describe methodologies and systems that already exist, including particular sectoral approaches, and those that are proposed to come into play, on the basis of viewpoints and debates involving social partners, education authorities, training institutes and government. Links between initiatives related to the assessment of non-formal learning and the national qualification standards/framework are investigated and reference made to areas of importance and concern. Finally, the effectiveness, legitimacy and validity of existing methods and experiences are assessed, including the issues of mobility and visibility. Gaps and weaknesses are highlighted and reflections on the future expressed.

Results

The past three to four years have witnessed the beginning of an awareness and interest on the part of social partners and government in Greece, to issues around the identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning. There is evidence of an initial level of dialogue on the issue. However, there is no coordinated integrated approach. Different parties are doing different things for different reasons, not under the heading of recognition of non-formal learning, but in areas that directly or indirectly relate to it. Thus, in many aspects this study provides insights, ideas and recommendations on what *could* and *should* be, rather than on what *is*. In a framework of unemployment, and lifelong learning to the extent that it impinges on unemployment, interest in Greece in the issues around non-formal learning focus essentially on:

- recognition of non-formal vocational training, which is partially and indirectly relevant to the issue of non-formal learning, and the need to ensure vocational training meets specific and dynamic labour market needs, and
- regulation over time of certain professions and trades, in a piecemeal and limited way, with inconsistent outcomes (in some instances regulation rests on the accreditation of non-formal learning, in others regulation enforces the need for formal qualifications).

To date, there is no coordinated, overt strategy for the development of a system of identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning in Greece. However, as is evidenced in the body of this report, there is an expressed willingness by the government and social partners and there are aspects of work that have been and are being done in areas that impinge on recognition of non-formal learning that could be used to build such a system.

1. BACKGROUND

Significant imbalances between the vocational training system and needs of the labour market lead to undervaluing of the training/learning undergone. This lack of harmony can be identified clearly in:

- the system of assessment of specialisations and the difficulties in changing from one specialisation to another (rigidity of the system);
- the lack of connection between teaching materials and the labour market;
- the systems of accrediting professional knowledge, which have as a reference point the teaching material and not the skills needs for practically exercising a profession.

2. CONTEXT, METHODOLOGIES, EXPERIENCES

National debate

Generally, there are two points of view: one based only on teaching materials as a reference point for accreditation, the other based on the real needs of the labour market. According to the first point of view, there is no way for skills to be recognised if they have not been taught in the context of official training materials, regardless of whether the skills in question are what the labour market needs. Thus, vocational training is cut off from the labour market. According to the second viewpoint, there is no point in recognizing skills which do not cover labour market needs, even if they were obtained from successful completion of training. In this case, employers do not recruit people who do not have the necessary skills, regardless of whether they have accredited formal learning, thus punishing the vocational training system (and graduates) when it does not meet the needs of the labour market.

The accreditation of abilities and competences constitutes part of the operation of the labour market, which is developing in a lifelong process in the sense that professionally active people acquire much knowledge, abilities and competences during their working life, in addition to those they developed in their initial education or training. The need for accreditation is clear, for both employees and employers. However, the dialogue in Greece on the issue of non-formal learning is currently at a very young age and not of a permanent character because of the structure and content of labour relations and resistance by bodies that represent the established training system. However, some positive examples exist, for instance in the hotel-catering sector. With 300 social security stamps, someone can take an intensive course at the State (EOT) school of tourism professions (STE), and after six months obtain the formal qualification of 'hotel employee.'

Agreement and conflict

Recognition of non-formal learning meets some opposition from universities and graduates of formal education and training structures, and sectoral associations whose professions are regulated.

A working group on accreditation set up by the Organization for Education and Vocational Training OEEK (1994-95), put the issue of recognizing non-formal learning to the social partners (national employers and employees' unions), as well as to a large number of first and second degree bodies of employers and workers. Some level of conflict was apparent among local level bodies, but not at regional and national levels.

All the bodies applauded and actively supported the pilot programme of recognition in specific sectors undertaken by the working group. They also emphasized the overall need to upgrade the training and education system, in line with both individual and group (sectoral, organizational) needs. In particular, concerning the accreditation of non-formal training, they pointed to the positive results that could be achieved if the system was based on the active collaborative participation of the relevant social partner bodies (sectoral).

The multifaceted movement of information and the wide implementation of new technologies, influence an individual's personal, social and professional life. Their adaptation to continuous changes usually happens through non-formal forms of learning, without them realizing that they are in a process of lifelong learning. The reality of this process imposes the need for recognition and differentiation of acquired skills and abilities, as well as their accreditation.

Every piece of knowledge has an actual value and if it is not calculated, the real capacity of human resources is distorted. Harmonization between skills from formal training and non-formal skills from experience is important, because a huge number of workers practise different professions and specialisations without having followed any kind of training. Widening the accreditation system is an essential prerequisite to include the range of knowledge, skills and abilities obtained either through training or through experiential processes. This could also promote the mobility of workers, improving their employability. An essential aspect in the development of such a system is the vertical differentiation of the bodies of specification / evaluation / certification, from the implementation bodies.

Women constitute the biggest percentage of the country's population and the unemployed. Many women, over a period of time when they are out of the labour market, gain skills and competences through non-formal processes (home building, child caring, voluntary work). This is not recognised. Nor is their experience as unpaid helpers in family businesses. An estimated quarter of working women are in this category. Women have abilities that influence the quality of work (e.g. loyalty to the company, disposition for work) that are often not taken into account by employers in their selection procedures. The position of women in the labour market is already difficult and attitudes against them are negative because so many of their skills and competences are acquired from non-formal contexts. A system of non-formal learning recognition and accreditation would have a significant effect on gender balance and fair play in the labour market.

Methodologies

Recognition and accreditation of non-formal learning has not yet been dealt with in an all-encompassing fashion in Greece, only through a series of individual laws and/or presidential decrees, defining the way in which experience is accredited and rights to exercise certain professions are awarded on the basis of experience/non-formal learning. A number of professions (mainly secondary and some tertiary sector technical skills) are now covered in this way.

Specialised centres for vocational training planning (EKESEK) are a new development shortly to be piloted by the Ministry of Labour and OAED. The EKESEK aim to ensure vocational training is matched to the needs of internal and external labour markets, through the specification of forms and levels of training. The products produced by the centres (professional profiles, training and technical packages and training of trainers material) will be subject to approval by EKEPIS and will support the implementation of the national accreditation system of continuous vocational training. Continuous vocational training is a direct tool for development only if it is connected with the needs, not of the

labour market in general, but of specific job positions for which particular training packages must be developed. In terms of the Greek labour market, it is envisaged that EKESEK should cover training design on a sectoral level.

Since as early as 1934, experience in a profession has been able to receive formal accreditation in Greece, thus allowing people to exercise a profession on the basis of experience: a legal framework was created by the Ministry of Industry at that time (still valid) allowing the generation of presidential decrees and supplementary clauses to regulate a number of production-related secondary sector professions.

The motivation from the workers' point of view was to secure and regulate their profession and from the State's point of view to provide social protection and safety. On this basis, a legal framework has been created for a significant number of professions, such as: car mechanics, plumbers (hydraulic), barbers, hairdressers, electricians (installers) and so on.

Businesses operate recruitment practices that demonstrate emphasis on a combination of methods that take into account non-formal learning, placing relatively little emphasis on formal certificates/degrees. Individual evaluation systems of employees are operated in some big businesses with respect to specific terms of the job profile and business contracts of work. These businesses are often international or cooperate with other European partner associations, adopting their methods.

Overall, current methods are not enough because they are piecemeal, fragmented and not part of a structured system. They only apply to technically based branches and professional areas and focus on the workplace context. There are many more professions and horizontal skill areas (transsectoral), including a range of tacit competences, where non-formal learning needs to be recognised.

Links between initiatives related to assessment and overall qualifications standards

The OEEK working group attempted to develop clear definitions of the levels of non-formal learning and the accreditation that could be awarded. Frameworks of reference for levels 1 to 3 were the formal system of training and education, in combination with the framework of Law 2009/92, SEDOC tables, the second directive, the white and green papers and the corresponding texts of Greek legislation. The working group concluded that titles obtained through such an accreditation process, would be equal to those from formal education and training, as far as *exercising professional rights* was concerned. However, they felt that in no way could these titles have the same value or power as formal ones, in relation to *access to the educational system*. In other words, the vocational training titles proposed by the working group set out professional knowledge and accredit the latter only, not educational level or title.

Another problem is the professional equivalence of accredited vocational training titles with the *level of permit*; this must be established by law to avoid any contradictions.

Education/training packages must be developed from job profiles. First of all, work needs to be done at the education and training system level. Beyond formal qualifications, the labour market today demands executive capacity with the ability to operate in circumstances and conditions characterized by change and uncertainty, the need to take

responsibility, to adapt and act quickly. The education and training system in Greece does not cater for these needs. Until it does, there will always be a gap between what the education and training system provides and what the labour market needs.

Links between levels of non-formal learning and formal standards require the development of a testing system (theoretical and practical) at a national or sectoral level, on the initiative of the social partners. Skills must be recognised in a broad way in the framework of changes in the organization of work and bearing in mind the quality of service factor. It could lead to a kind of portfolio or competence assessment report for each worker, recognised by both employers and employees.

Evaluation and experience

It is important to consider the question of quality in developing and applying methods to assess and recognize non-formal learning. How accurate is it to give a picture of something without any information about its circumstances or environment? This is one of the drawbacks of using electronic means-it is simple, quick and internationally accessible, but it probably does not provide the detail or feedback on an individual level that is required for a quality understanding of the competences and abilities acquired by an individual, through a range of non-formal learning contexts over time.

Methodologies tailored to individualized assessment of non-formal learning are the most useful and the only way of really evaluating and accrediting people's competences. But, at the same time, this is the most complex and least cost-effective approach. The question of 'who pays' and how much they are prepared to pay thus influences the methodology used. In terms of the standards currently being developed in pilot vocational training planning centres (EKESEK), the intention is tripartite.

A system of recognition of non-formal learning is vital to assist businesses in recruitment processes and back up their *de facto* recognition.

Transfer and mobility

Businesses should be obliged, in the context of the standards being developed in Greece, to ensure their employees reach a certain level of learning in terms of core skills. Otherwise, there are significant problems of transferability. If skills and the standards related to them apply only to a specific sector, then even accredited, they are non-transferable. Thus, there needs to be some obligatory core skills standards and employers should have a role in helping workers develop and test for these. For example, there are cases in other EU countries where businesses give all their workers accreditation in these core skills. It is important for an EU body to be involved in the process so that standards and certification can be transferable across Europe. Employers must be given some incentive by the State, in order to give workers opportunities to acquire and accredit skills (core). There is no structured system of transferring abilities from level to level or from area to area, just subjectively and experientially. This transferability can happen only if they are specified in the basic professional competences as core skills.

3. CONCLUSIONS

In the context of a system to identify, assess and recognize non-formal learning, whereby standards and profiles will be developed, there must also be a modular credit-based approach to training opportunities. People could access training only in those areas where they have knowledge gaps, to reach efficiently the necessary level for accreditation of a particular competence/specialism. The process of recognition should be done by an independent body, involving social partners (national and sectoral), key actors in the labour market (including local) and education/training system, under the supervision of the Ministry of Employment. The system should be dynamic to take into account improvements in the organization of employment, the reality of the labour market and the ongoing changes by sector/profession/work environment/specialisation.

1. BACKGROUND

The greatest capital of every economy is its human resources. In an age where 80% of professional knowledge is upgraded every 10 years and by the end of the century people will change jobs on average five to seven times in their lifetime, people must grow and change in their professional abilities if they want to remain an active element in the productive forces. Hence, the need for continuing development and training and the recognition of all kinds of non-formal learning. It also means that professional requirements as reflected in the established systems of education and training are no longer in line with the real needs of the labour market. In contemporary Greece, little value is placed on technical education: 70% of students still prefer academic studies (*source*: Vasiliou, S, Special report on 'training', in periodical *Viotechnika Themata*, produced by Chamber of Light Industry, Athens. Issue 128, June 1998). Technical education remains the poor relative in education. The result is well known: a growing number of people with degrees and qualifications but without jobs. During recent years, some key reforms have developed the horizons of the Greek educational and training system.

1.1 The formal education system in Greece

Overall responsibility for education belongs to the Ministry of National Education and Religion (YPEPTH), structured as follows:

compulsory education:

Compulsory education in Greece lasts nine years, from the age of six until 15.

secondary education:

Institutions of secondary education are lyceums and technical professional schools (three year cycle). From the academic year 1997-98, the law of the single lyceum was passed. For employed students, secondary education is also available at night school. OEEK

tertiary education

Tertiary education is provided by technological education institutes (TEI) and highest education institutes (AEI).

Educational units and staff 1993-94			
Institute	Units	Lectures	Students
Primary schools	7 376	39 821	744 300
Secondary school (Year 1-3)	1 857	29 459	443 600
Secondary school (Year 4-6)	1 170	17 729	255 500
KATEE	44	Merged with TEI's	
TEI	13	5 427	77 900
AEI	18	9 354	109 300
Source: Viotechnnika Themata periodical of the Chamber of Light Industry, Athens (Issue 128, June 1998, p. 38)			

1.2. The national vocational training system

The development of vocational training in Greece started during the 1960s with the help of international organizations (OECD, International Bank, EEC), with the main aim of covering the direct needs of newly developed industry by supplying it with a specialized labour force. In this framework, a variety of different types and forms of vocational training have come into being.

In 1989, the State began work to create a connection between vocational training, the social partners and local labour market bodies. Key participant partners are:

- National Council of Vocational Education, Training and Employment (ESEKA) which is under the Ministry of Employment, responsible for the strategy of non-formal vocational training;
- National System of Vocational Education and Training (ESEK), to which the Organisation for Education and Vocational Training (OEEK) belongs, responsible for formal vocational training;
- OAED (Organisation for Employment and the Labour Force);
- the National Accreditation Centre for Vocational Training structures (EKEPIS);
- the Institute of Labour;
- the Institute of Vocational Orientation.

As procedures began for the entry of Greece into European Union, interest in vocational training increased oriented mainly towards continuous training. During the 1980s and the early 1990s, in the framework of the European Structural Funds, various types and forms of vocational training developed rapidly and in an uncoordinated fashion (in-house training programmes, vocational training for the unemployed, etc.).

By 1993, some 3 500 non-profit training/human resource development companies had been set up, stimulated by the availability of EU support. Some of these are among the 260 recently (1997-98) accredited KEK (vocational training centres), implementing mainly programmes of training for unemployed people, with EU cofunding. In addition, there are some 184 000 students in initial training (18 000 OAED, 41 000 IEK, 22 000 TES and 102 000 TEL and EPL).

The Ministry of Labour, through the Organization of Employment and the Labour Force, manages technical professional schools and vocational training programmes for adults in vocational training centres (KEK), run by a variety of public and private bodies.

The Ministry of Education oversees formal vocational training through the National Educational and Vocational Training System (ESEEK), established by law 2009/1992. ESEEK monitors changing needs in the labour market, economic and social conditions on a national and local level, and scientific and technological development.

The aims of ESEEK:

- Organization, development and provision of vocational training.
- Formal recognition of vocational training.
- Harmonization of professional training with vocational training.
- Implementation of national and EU programmes of professional educational training.

In the framework of ESEEK a public trust was founded: the Organization of Vocational Education and Training (OEEK), which provides formal vocational training and has overall responsibility for vocational training institutes (IEK), operating in Greece since 1992. IEK are vocational training institutes whose basic mission is to provide initial formal (recognised certification) vocational training. Today there are some 173 IEK (103 public, 70 private), throughout Greece.

OEEK is managed by an 11-member board, including the social partners (GSEVEE, SEV, ESEE and GSEE). To ensure closer contact between OEEK and the labour market, local advisory committees were established to study local training needs and report to OEEK on how these can be met. Thus, from quiet beginnings of vocational training during the 1960s and 1970s, Greece moved into a period of rapid and uncoordinated development of structures of vocational training, partly motivated by access to European Union funding.

The **formal** system includes lower technical schools of the Organization of Employment of Labour Force (OAED), technical vocation schools (TES), technical vocational lyceums (TEL) and institutes of vocational training (IEK) which are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. At the same time, there are many more schools operating in specific sectors such as: tourism, health, agriculture, which are under the responsibility of their respective ministries or government departments. Characteristic of the schools of the

formal system of vocational training is the award of officially recognised degrees which are equivalent to the recognition of specific professional skills and many of them to rights to practise a profession.

The system of **non-formal** vocational education training includes: centres of vocational training (KEK-for which a system of accreditation has recently been completed, by the Hellenic Accreditation Centre EKEPIS), liberal studies centres and liberal vocational schools, centres of intensive technical vocational training, in-house company training (which tends to cover 100% of workforce needs, since it is designed with particular employees in mind), seminars and short-term courses.

As a result of this uncoordinated mass of training provisions, and the absence of an integrated and concrete national vocational education and training policy, the latter developed according to the provisions of EU resources and not according to the needs of the Greek labour market and the equivalent demand for skills. This situation has aggravated the absence of a connection between vocational training and labour market needs, as well as the absence of research to identify and forecast needs and the lack of an integrated employment policy.

The fact that vocational training programmes for the unemployed are not connected to employment policies means that training resources are inefficiently used. Those who have attended further training have a rate of 20% unemployment, while those having just basic education a 14% unemployment rate. The equivalent averages for the EU are 11.5% and 23.5%, respectively.

In Greece, there is no single central executive organ for vocational training planning nor a system for assessing the results of training and the whys and wherefores of graduate absorption into the labour market.

1.3. Level of education, training and unemployment

According to the Greek National Statistics Service (GNSS), graduates from all categories have rates of unemployment above the average with the exception of those with only compulsory education, graduates of OAED technical schools and the holders of postgraduate degrees:

Unemployment according to educational level

overall percentage	10%
unemployed with postgraduate degree	5.6%
unemployed with higher education degree (AEI)	10.1%
unemployed with technological education degree (TEI-KATEE)	14%
unemployed with general secondary school diploma	14.3%
unemployed with technical secondary school diploma	23.2%
unemployed with technical school degree	10.5%
unemployed with OAED diploma	5.8%
unemployed with basic obligatory education	6.5%

Source: GNSS 1995.

In Greece, there are an estimated 1 291 700 degree holders, which constitutes 33% of the economically active population. In a decade, 180 000 students graduated from higher education institutes (AEI) in Greece and at the same time equivalent job openings were just 84 000. The 'degree mania' which has led Greeks to 'hunt' any kind of degree, together with the irresponsibility of the training system which provides training and grants degrees regardless of the absorption or not of graduates into the labour market, makes it easy to understand the problem.

1.4. Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) and vocational training

The fact that every 10 years 70-80% of knowledge in the main professions will have been updated, means that continuous training and experiential learning constitute a necessity for the viability of SMEs.

Research commissioned by the Chamber of Light Industry in Athens in 1994, showed that on average only one fifth of SME owners have higher education or a degree from a technical school. This percentage reduces as the business size reduces.

training level of light industry owners research in 2 000 businesses	
primary school	21%
secondary school (1 - 6)	37%
technical school	22%
higher school	6%
highest school	22%
Source: ICAP (1994).	

Equivalent research by the Greek productivity centre (ELKEPA) in 1993, showed that 50% of management in big businesses have a masters degree, while in small ones (which account for more than 90% of all businesses), only 2% have such levels of formal qualification. The general confederation of workers (GSEE) estimates that three quarters of the workforce in Greece have general education, only 30% with professional qualifications.

SMEs seek, on the one hand, workers with general experience and knowledge of different jobs (for example: finance, sales, maintenance, etc.) and, on the other hand, specialized technicians for particular jobs. Research suggests that:

- 66% of SMEs do not have a specialized technician, preferring a 'jack of all trades';
- 13% of SME owners have a technical school degree, 18% a degree of higher education, while 44% completed only three years of secondary school;
- only 20% sent a person (themselves or a worker) on a technical training seminar although 95% of these businesses said they obtained positive results from the seminars;
- 66% of the businesses said that vocational training is necessary in general, but 59% said that neither they nor their personnel had any particular vocational training needs;
- 50% of the businesses that declared future employee needs said that they sought a technician. Half believe this will be difficult because there are not any on the market.

1.5. Conclusion

Significant imbalances between the vocational training system and the needs of the labour market lead to the undervaluing of training/learning undergone. This lack of harmony can be identified clearly in, amongst other areas:

- the system of assessment of specialisations and the difficulties in changing from one specialisation to another (rigidity of the system);
- the lack of connection between teaching materials and the labour market;
- the systems of accrediting professional knowledge, which have as a reference point the teaching material and not the skills' needs for practically exercising the profession.

The lack of connection between vocational training and the labour market results in a high cost of training. This cost is split between the State and enterprises: for the State, in addition to the cost of training, there is the cost of unemployment benefits and the loss incurred from people moving away from the profession they were trained in. For enterprises, there are increased costs of absorption and adaptation of the workforce. According to research by the Chamber of Light Industry in Athens, graduates from technical schools need 247 days (i.e., a working year, an exceptionally long time for someone who is trained) in order for their performance to bring results in the business. The equivalent timespan for unspecialized personnel was 377 days. The difference of 130 days less for trained personnel is positive in terms of absolute numbers, but if we include in the calculation the cost of two years of specialized training and the number of graduates that do not find a job and thus abandon the field in which they were trained, the final outcome is negative. (References: Vassiliou, S., *Accreditation of professional skills and the labour market*, April 1997. *Viotechnika Themata*: 'Training' (ed. Vassiliou, 5). Issue 128, June 1998.)

2. CONTEXT, METHODOLOGIES, EXPERIENCES

2.1. Context

What is non-formal learning? Knowledge for which there are no degrees or official documents obtained through experience or practice, in the framework of an unstructured system, resulting in the non-recognition of that knowledge or skill/competence in relation to equivalent levels of formal education or professional specialisation. Every learning process which is not part of formal education and vocational training system structures can be characterized as 'non-formal.'

Non-formal learning is a *process* of skill (competences, abilities) acquisition that people go through in everyday situations such as:

- research, identification of merchandise, market rules, currencies and subdivisions in everyday market of products and services;
- orientation, research, identification of a house in a different neighborhood, city;
- research of an information source, identification, and evaluation;
- getting a baby to sleep.

Examples of non-formal learning contexts are: unpaid work in a family business, home-based work, hobbies, self-employment, social and public life, voluntary work, politics, internal business training and, most significantly, on-the-job learning: 'The majority of people that work with marble obtained their skills in practice...there is no body which provides training for the particular profession...The majority of bakers practise their occupation based on experience or apprenticeship...Become a coppersmith by following the family tradition...Most electricians secured their permits without formal education, based on their experience...Many repairers of cooling systems do not have a degree, but many years of experience...Many plumbers with non-formal learning are skilful technicians, often many times better than fellow workers with formal learning...The biggest percentage of silver/goldsmiths have skills based on experience.'

2.1.1. National debate

An accreditation system plays a critical role in the connection between vocational training and the labour market. Its goal is to accredit skills gained through vocational training programmes and at the same time ensure that skills acquired are able to cover the real needs of the labour market. Generally, there are two points of view: one based only on the teaching materials as a reference point for accreditation, the other based on the real needs of the labour market.

According to the first point of view, there is no way for skills to be recognised if they have not been taught in the context of official training materials, regardless of whether the skills in question are what the labour market needs. Thus, vocational training is cut off from the labour market. According to the second viewpoint, there is no sense in recognizing skills which do not cover labour market needs, even if they were obtained from the good execution of training. In this case, employers do not recruit people who do not have the necessary skills, regardless of whether they have accredited formal learning, thus punishing the vocational training system (and graduates) when it does not meet the needs of the labour market.

An accreditation system is needed to recognise the importance for the labour market of real skills and competences gained through non-formal learning. Participation of the social partners in the system is essential. The operation of an independent tripartite system which will accredit not vocational training, but skills and competences, requires interconnection of training and production, something yet to be achieved in Greece. Formal and non-formal training as well as experience, need to be embraced in a common, integrated accreditation system, so that their complementarity is possible, with the main aim that they respond to the needs of the labour market.

What are the views of key bodies in Greece?

- **Ministries**

The accreditation of abilities, skills and competences is totally different from the accreditation of vocational training. The latter has to certify if a graduate has obtained the expected knowledge and abilities provided by a particular educational or training programme. This process of certification can be done through structures responsible for education/training (e.g. Ministry of Education, OEEK, ΕΚΕΠΙΣ). On the other hand, accreditation of skills and competences is part of the framework of labour market operation and certifies whether people have the necessary abilities and competences to cover a particular job position with equivalent content of work. The question of how skills and competences were obtained is of no interest.

The accreditation of abilities and competences constitutes part of the operation of the labour market which is developing in a lifelong process in the sense that professionally active people acquire much knowledge, abilities and competences during their working life, in addition to those they developed in their initial education or training. The need for accreditation is clear for both employees and employers.

Nevertheless, the issue of recognizing non-formal learning does not constitute a theme of social dialogue because 'it is not mature enough from the employee side, it is not evaluated from the employer side and it is not a market requirement to ensure product/service quality' (Ministry of Labour).

• Employers

Thousands of people in Greece are practising their professions without the relevant qualifications. The recognition of their experience, together with security of professional rights, will result in a total upgrading of the level of operation of the country's human resources. Non-formal learning (as an ongoing complement to obligatory general education) has meaning as long as it has a specific (dynamic) reference point (specification/ target/ specialisation), reflective of the labour market workings and the time-space framework of the employment system.

A 'professional competence' constitutes a synthesis of three dynamic elements: knowledge (information), skills and attitude, which coexist in the practice of every profession. Accreditation of professional competence is not confirmation that the person offers concentrated recognised skills, abilities and attitudes, but recognition of practice in a specific framework (space, period) of professional behaviour. As such, they have general power in the specific framework, which has to be made clear.

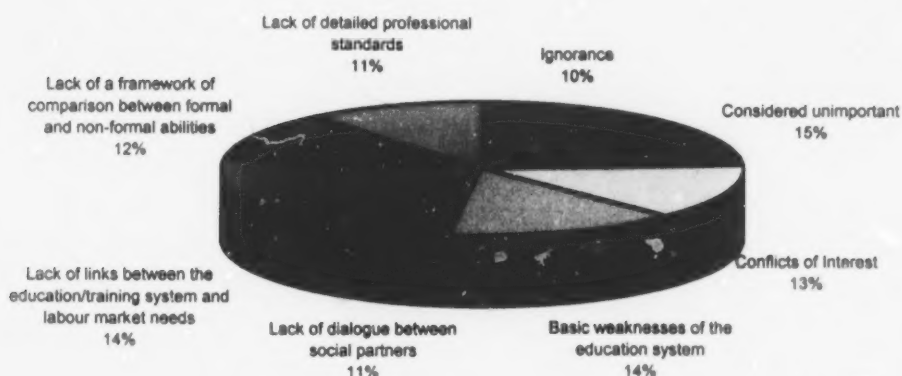
Behaviour must be included in the concept of non-formal learning, recognition of which will help quantify qualitative characteristics, such as:

- company loyalty;
- honesty;
- effectiveness-attitude towards improvement;
- communication ability;
- flexibility/agility.

'Dialogue on non-formal learning is not at a satisfactory level because the term is relatively new in Greece and until now, there has been a different orientation in the evaluation of the skills of a person.' In recent years the State and social partners have begun to work on the development of a recognition system where the key questions are:

1. Who determines the needs?
2. Who implements the education and training work?
3. Who evaluates and corrects this work?
4. Who evaluates the effectiveness of the covering of needs and accrediting?

Asked why non-formal learning is not recognised in Greece, employers said:



- **Employee unions**

The formulation and implementation of a non-formal skills recognition system in Greece requires the creation, through legislation, of a tripartite system which will determine the framework and rules, specialized by sector and professional level.

'Dialogue on the issue of non-formal learning is currently at a very young age and not of a permanent character because of the structure and content of labour relations.'

- **Employment services**

Accreditation of competences makes a person more responsible. It activates him/her to improve skills through lifelong learning and promises him/her greater chances of employment and career development. There is a need for recognition of professional skills acquired through non-formal learning. This is not expected to be covered by EKEPIS which deals only with accrediting the quality of trainers and programmes.

- **Sectoral trade associations**

A non-formal skill recognition system is needed to give a new dimension to the meaning of knowledge beyond today's models which do not reflect contemporary issues and reality. Recognition of non-formal learning constitutes a need of the times, creating new job opportunities, professions and specialisations, as well as providing faster and more effective professional development.

- **Training/education establishments**

'There is no real dialogue in Greece on the subject of non-formal learning because of resistance from bodies that represent the established training system'. However, some positive examples exist, for instance in the hotel-catering sector. With 300 social security stamps, someone can take an intensive course at the State (EOT) school of tourism professions (STE), and after six months obtain a formal qualification of 'hotel employee'.

- **Independent user/expert**

'There must be a serious strategic approach from the State, in order to move forward on this important issue. Dialogue must be animated through work teams based on the participation of social partners, education/training and government bodies, meetings, round table discussions, and so on'. Foreign systems, etc. must be studied to use and adapt existing methods to create and implement an appropriate system in Greece.

2.1.2. Motives

A large number of adults in Greece have, through practising a profession, gained a variety of professional abilities and competences (knowledge, skills and behaviour) equivalent to, or greater than, the abilities that graduates from formal training and education levels/schools have obtained. These adults do not have formal training titles to accredit the level of their competences. In order for their experience to be recognised and certified, it is necessary to create a system, which will have the ability to:

- (a) link particular knowledge and competences gained from experience to a specific level of formal vocational training;
- (b) identify gaps in knowledge, compared with the vocational training level;
- (c) establish a procedure to fill the gaps;
- (d) establish a procedure of accreditation and the awarding of an equivalent title.

The issue of recognizing non-formal learning can be seen as a need to raise the competitiveness of the Greek economy, in particular in relation to other EU economies. Greater competitiveness results in increased viability of businesses (productivity, quality of products and conditions of work) and thereby the development of employment. And in the long term:

- overall improvement of the professional level of the work force;
- overall and concrete improvement of cooperative relations between systems of education and employment.

In the context of rapid change and development, especially technological advances, it is important to enable the workforce to adapt quickly to new and changing needs. Thus, a model for continuing learning, training and education is needed. Recognition of non-formal learning can be seen as a social need because:

- (a) it promotes social equality between citizens, in the framework of the system of employment, free labour market and movement of employees;
- (b) available skills are officially recognised and therefore there is motivation for progress and continued upgrading of skills;
- (c) operation of the labour market is improved through agreements about terms of practice and access to professions, support for a product quality framework (goods and services);
- (d) it provides employers and employees with the necessary mutual quality code to back up demands and agreements over the quality/quantity of work and remuneration;
- (e) it provides recognition, both for the employed (self-employed, employees) and unemployed, with an equivalent level of formal training;
- (f) it offers a framework of reference for the quality of work and products in the wider context of consumer protection;
- (g) it gives a fuller framework of specifications of required and available skills for the unemployed seeking work;
- (h) it promotes linking and mutual understanding of the education and training system with the employment system, thanks to the cooperation necessary for the specification of a training code or reference tables of professional activities (PANEDRA) by level and profession, and thereafter reference tables for professional titles/diplomas, programme development, implementation, and so on. (Source: *Accreditation of Adult Vocational Training*. O.E.E.K. 1995).

What are the views of key bodies?

• Ministries

A system for recognition of non-formal learning does not operate in Greece. Nevertheless, it is well accepted that all training actions, education, acquisition of professional experience, of all forms and levels taking place in the framework of European and national policies, must lead to recognition of experience, skills, abilities and professional attitudes, in order to promote labour market entrance and career development. In the society of knowledge, as well as the 'job hunt,' every recognition of professional experience, formal or not, is needed.

- **Employers**

Recognition of non-formal learning can lead to greater visibility in the labour market, in particular in relation to the salary system which will be reflective of the real skills of employees if non-formal learning is taken into account. It is also very important for the self-employed and entrepreneurs who, if they find themselves out of work, are left with nothing to prove their gained experience and competences.

- **Employees**

Employers may well take into account skills from non-formal learning in their recruitment practices, but their motives may also be financial since wage agreements are based on formal qualifications. Thus, recognition of non-formal learning must be incorporated into wage agreements and salary levels (which currently rest on formal qualifications alone), such that people are paid their worth.

- **Employment services**

Recognition of non-formal learning is very important because of the high percentage of the labour force with significant work experience which remains unrecognised for the knowledge and skills it carries. Recognition of this kind also promotes the movement of workers. It is important that non-formal learning be recognised because people with experience but without titles must have equal opportunities of access to the labour market to develop themselves and to be paid according to their real skills and their work.

2.1.3. Agreement and conflict

A working group on accreditation, set up by the Organization for Education and Vocational Training OEEK (1994-95), put the issue of recognizing non-formal learning to the social partners (national employers and employees unions), as well as to a large number of first and second degree bodies of employers and workers. Some level of conflict was apparent among local level bodies, but not at regional and national levels.

All the bodies applauded and supported actively the pilot programme of recognition in specific sectors undertaken by the working group. They also emphasised the overall need to upgrade the training and education system in line with both individual and group (sectoral, organizational) needs. In particular, concerning the accreditation of non-formal training, they pointed to the positive results that could be achieved if the system is based on the active collaborative participation of the relevant social partner bodies (sectoral).

Recognition of non-formal learning generates some conflicts between graduates in the same trade (e.g. engineers) from different schools within the formal education and training system (e.g. IEK, TEI, AEI). In addition, in some areas there is strong disagreement by sectoral associations whose professions are regulated, who practise on the basis of formal qualifications and/or accredited experience.

Thus, the development of a system for the recognition of non-formal learning meets conflicts of a union character between workers with formal qualifications and those in the same profession, without. For example, an employer issued a recommendation letter and performance report for one of his employees specifying the specialized knowledge he had, in order for him to apply for a permit to exercise that profession as a self-employed person. However, the trade association for that particular specialisation managed to disprove the equivalence of the worker's competence acquired through non-formal learning with the formal standards.

On the other hand, many sectoral trade associations agree with recognition of non-formal learning: apart from the regulated professions, sectoral trade organisations believe an average of 84% of their members would benefit by non-formal learning recognition. For example:

Who benefits from recognition of non-formal learning?	
Sectoral Trade Association	Percentage (%) of Members
Textiles	100
Marble production	70-80
Clothing	100
Manufacture of ready-to-wear clothing	100
Boiler fitters (regulated)	0
Photographers	50
Photocopies	100
Refrigerator repairer	30
Hydraulic fitters	100
Silversmith	100
Professionals-Merchants	80
Watch makers	70
Opticians (regulated)	0
Needle work	100

(Source: table created on the basis of questionnaire/interviews conducted with representatives of the specific individual sectoral associations, based in Thessaloniki).

The vast majority of organizations (96%), sectoral associations (80%), and employers (53%) confirmed the value of developing a system of recognition of non-formal learning: directly or indirectly everyone benefits: businesses can improve their human resource management, for workers/non-formal learners recognition is power, customers get better quality, for sectoral unions there is development and recognition of the sector, and so on.

What are the views of key bodies?

- **Ministries**

The multifaceted movement of information and the wide implementation of new technologies influence an individual's personal, social and professional life. Their adaptation to continuous changes usually happens through non-formal forms of learning, without them realizing that they are in a process of lifelong learning. The reality of this process imposes the need for recognition and differentiation of acquired skills and abilities, as well as their accreditation.

- **Employers**

Very often formal knowledge is not in accordance with the real needs of the job: someone with experience knows more than someone with just a degree/qualification. Such a system of accrediting non-formal learning will recognize this reality. People who never had the chance to study will be able to certify their years of experience through such a system and no longer be regarded as an unspecialized worker.

A non-formal learning recognition system will help the employer to judge applicants for jobs and evaluate performance. Such a system will equally help the candidate in the presentation of his/her knowledge. Recognition of non-formal learning is also felt to be important by employers, for workers' 'self-actualization' as well as for business people, who will be motivated to be informed, to search their environment, to obtain information and training based on the new market reality, meet new specialisations in their profession, open new horizons.

Every piece of knowledge has an actual value and if it is not calculated, the real capacity of human resources is distorted. Harmonization between skills from formal training and non-formal skills from experience is important because a huge number of workers practise different professions and specialisations without having followed any kind of training. Widening the accreditation system is an essential prerequisite, in order to include the range of knowledge, skills and abilities obtained either through training or through experiential processes. This could also promote the mobility of workers, proving their employability. An essential aspect in the development of such a system is the vertical differentiation of the bodies of specification/evaluation/certification, from the implementation bodies.

- **Employee unions**

The recognition of non-formal learning, through the determination of commonly accepted criteria and following procedures from negotiations and social dialogue, will contribute to the rationalization of work relations, quality development of human resources, widening the possibilities for career development and the limitation of the total managerial power concerning job posts and rights.

- **Employment services**

The establishment of a certification system for levels of training must make provision for recognition of non-formal learning in the same context. A huge number of employees have skills and knowledge from non-formal learning which could be used in a productive way in the labour market thereby improving as well as easing access and progress of employees. Skill accreditation in this way will improve links between learning and occupation and promote professional mobility. It will make better use of the labour force and motivate people to 'lifelong learning.'

- **Users/independent experts**

In terms of gender equality, the recognition of non-formal learning will help women in particular. Women constitute the biggest percentage of the country's population and of the unemployed. Many women, over a period of time when they are out of the labour market, gain skills and competences through non-formal processes (home building, childcare, voluntary work). This is not recognised. Nor is their experience as unpaid helpers in family businesses, an estimated quarter of working women are in this category. Women have abilities that influence the quality of work (e.g. loyalty to the company, disposition for work) that are often not taken into account by employers in their selection procedures. The position of women in the labour market is already difficult and attitudes against them are negative because so many of their skills and competences are acquired from non-formal contexts. A system of non-formal learning recognition and accreditation would have a significant effect on gender balance and fair play in the labour market.

Asked who is most disadvantaged by lack of recognition
of non-formal learning, employers said:



Who is against recognition of non-formal learning?

- Unions of regulated or degree-holding professionals/sectoral associations, such as: car mechanics, hot water pipe plumbers, boiler maintenance, electricians, installers of cooling systems, engineers.
- Universities, who wish to protect the power, recognition and general image of the formal education and qualification system.
- Unions of university graduates, who see their interests endangered by people with the same knowledge and skills but without formal qualifications.
- Professional bodies which protect and help the reward policies and career development of their members, through recognition of qualifications/levels of formal training.

Areas of conflict must be overcome in a widely accepted accreditation system. The whole process must be rooted in dialogue, participation and agreement by the social partners including sectoral-level unions.

2.2. Methodologies, institutions, systems

2.2.1. Methodologies

An accreditation system should play an important role in the maintenance of high standards in vocational training and professional/work performance. The implementation of an independent accreditation system can be an important indication that programmes of vocational training are operating well and can limit deviations. On the other hand, a training accreditation system per se does not tackle the problem of lack of harmony between training and the labour market: This requires a system of direct connection between training and work, whereby professional skills and experiential knowledge are accredited.

A large number of employer-entrepreneurs and workers in Greece have significant professional skills gained through experience. In the process of setting rules and standards for the practice of professions, a need is created for the validation of experience as professional skills equivalent to those obtained through formal vocational training, or a combination of the two leading to a higher degree.

This kind of recognition and accreditation of non-formal learning has not yet been dealt with in an all-encompassing fashion in Greece, only through a series of individual laws and/or presidential decrees, defining the way in which experience is accredited and rights to exercise certain professions is awarded, on the basis of experience/non-formal learning. Many professions (mainly secondary and tertiary sector technical skills) are now covered in this way (see 2.2.1.3).

2.2.1.1. Working Group OEEK

In mid-1994, the Organization for Education and Vocational Training (OEEK) set up (Z10310/22.6.94) a working group to study the accreditation of (non-formal) vocational training of adults (over 25 years) and its enrolment in the formal education and training system (ESEEK).¹ The main aim was to put forward proposals for the creation of a system for the evaluation of experience (employed, self-employed/employers and unemployed), the assessment of gaps in knowledge, a method by which knowledge gaps can be filled and a means of access, on a case by case basis, to the process of accreditation equivalent to a specific level of formal vocational training. The working group highlighted the need for a general system of accreditation of experience, concomitant with titles of vocational training.

¹ Participating in the working group were the training manager and a trainer from OEEK, vice president of the Pedagogical Institute, representatives of the Panhellenic Workers Confederation (GSEE), the Hellenic Employers/Industrialists Association (SEV) and the General Confederation of Professions, Light Manufacturers and Traders (GSEVEE), a trainer from the Technical Chamber of Greece (TEE) and the training manager of the Organization for Employment and the Labour Force (OAED). The group worked officially from June 1994 to February 1995 (according to the official OEEK decision, Z/10310/22.06.94), and continued until July 1995, when the final report was submitted to the management of OEEK.

Such a system would have to be able to provide equivalencies between experience gained and level of vocational training and, further to any necessary complementary training (modules), accredit that experience by awarding it an equivalent title. Such a title must have power equivalent to the title achieved through formal learning of the same level, as far as rights to exercise a profession are concerned, and be absorbed into the framework of the formal system of education and vocational training (ESEEK).

In the context of the proposals made by the OEEK working group, enrolment by level is according to educational title together with experience. Access to *level 1* accreditation requires completion of basic obligatory education and five years proven experience. This is equivalent to the technological content of 'lower technical schools' (pre-1979) or equivalent PANEDRA specifications or task and skills description in the training code approved by OEEK.

Access to *level 2* accreditation requires three years secondary schooling or those with a diploma from an OAED or Ministry of Education approved technical school and at least three years experience or those with a level 1 title and a total of at least eight years experience.

This is equivalent to the technological content of TES and/or equivalent PANEDRA specifications.

Access to *level 3* accreditation requires completion of four years secondary schooling, graduate of TES or equivalent colleges, and five years experience or those with titles equivalent, professionally, to level 2 and at least three years additional experience. This is equivalent to the technological content of the relevant department/professional branch of TEL or equivalent PANEDRA or training code classifications. Access to post-secondary accreditation (which would need changes to L.2009/92) requires completion of secondary school and five years proven experience in the specialisation or those with level 3 and three more years of experience.

The years of experience suggested are indicative. In practice, they differ from profession to profession.

The OEEK study focused on the issue of accreditation of non-formal (i.e. non-recognised by official systems) vocational training, rather than on the accreditation of skills and experience acquired through non-formal learning. However, an important part of the programme was pilot investigations of accreditation in a sample of professions, undertaken by subgroups made up of three representatives (the social partners and the technical training outfit) for each trade:

- hot-water plumbing installations;
- car mechanics;
- hotel employees;
- maintenance of electrical installations in a particular sector of production.

During testing, the teams went into businesses and drew up profiles with individual workers, tested them and defined how their knowledge could be transformed into a training title. In some instances, the individual lacked competences in certain areas. These could be covered by access to (modular structured) training, and thereafter knowledge could be accredited. The pilots showed the value of implementing further such 'test' cases in real situations. In this way, knowledge gained from experience by individuals in all kinds of sectors/activities could be drawn up in detail, compared with the knowledge gained from specific education/training levels and a framework of equivalencies drawn up.

In building a system of assessing and recognizing non-formal learning in Greece, examples from the UK and France have been used (e.g. by OAED and the Ministry of Labour, in developing the mission of the pilot centres for planning of vocational training). However, examples from other countries must be examined, adapted to fit the reality in Greece and made use of where appropriate.

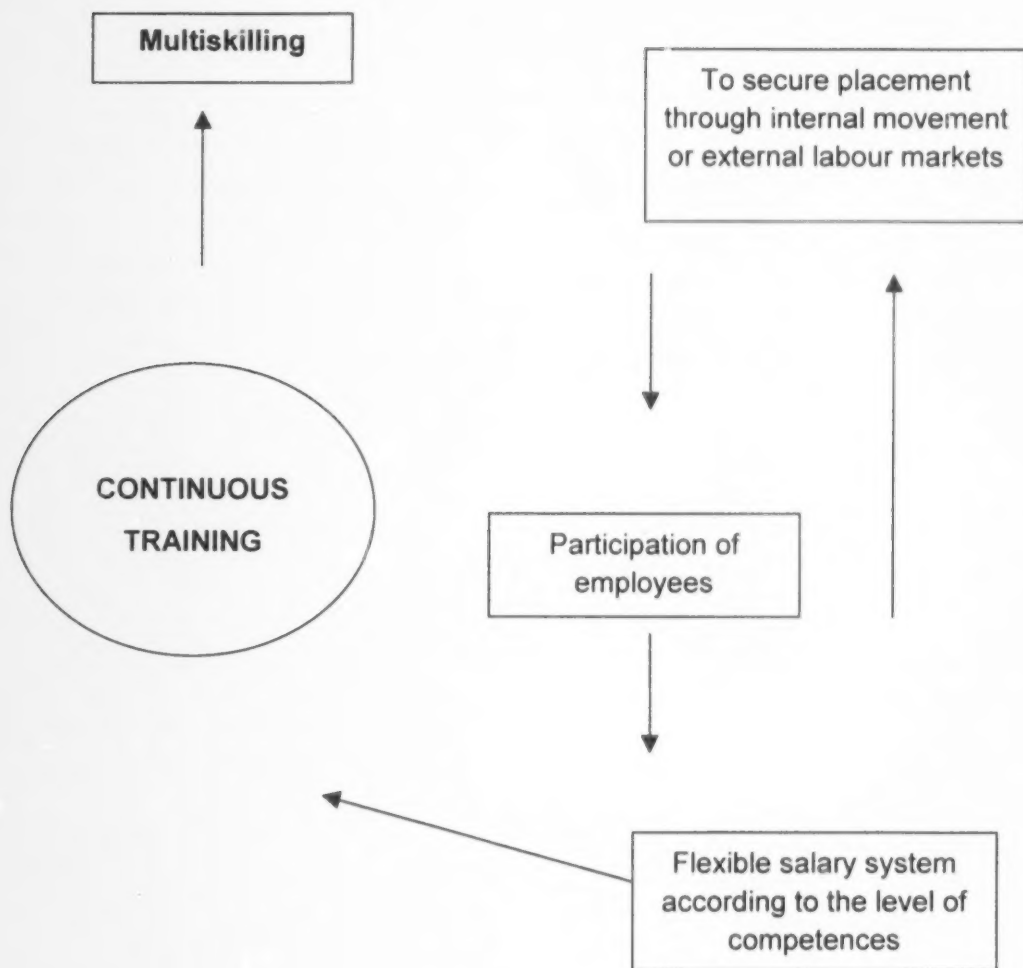
2.2.1.2. Specialized centres for vocational training planning (EKESEK)

Specialist centres for vocational training planning (EKESEK) are a new development shortly to be piloted by the Ministry of Labour and OAED. The essential goal is the development of job profiles, by trade and level, and goal setting for the equivalent education and training packages, consisting of core skills and specialist skills. These packages will be constantly updated according to sectoral developments and monitored over time. Each profession/trade is structured according to the labour market, following the levels set out by the EU. Initially, work will be done on five or six sectoral specialisms including branches of the tourism and car industry sectors.

Initial training does not respond to labour market needs and continuous changes, despite providing the worker with basic 'know-how'. So, the beginning of training is weak in relation to demands for competence. The answer to this problem is in the creation of a continuous training structure which will play a central role, not only a complementary one, and will also constitute a testing laboratory for the real labour market.

Pressure that new factors have put on business has been faced by the introduction of new technologies, restructuring of the production model and thus of labour. So, in the field of mass production and labour, a quality change is being created, which has to do with human resource development: the main structures of this contemporary flexible scheme, as it relates mainly to larger businesses, are:

- business size is reduced and networks between big and small become bigger, while outsourcing is increased and new businesses appear;
- big businesses introduce flexibility to their structures as well as quality criteria and horizontal management;
- production is specialized and the quality of the final product is improved;
- the definition of working positions is widened;
- labour is multiskilled to meet the needs of new job positions.



The new scheme (based on the OECD model) demands new approaches to human resource development. Vocational training plays an intermediate role between human resource development and the labour market, where:

- competences and skills must have a wide implementation range in order to respond to the changing needs of the labour market (it is calculated that a worker will change occupation about eight times in his/her life);
- included in labour relations is the updating of skills and competences according to contemporary needs through training schemes;
- security of internal movement through in-house planning;
- legal frameworks which will guarantee external movement; and
- fair salary systems for people that obtain competences through continuous training/non-formal learning.

External and internal movement is mainly based either on the completion of knowledge and competences obtained or on the acquisition of new competences. In both cases, competences are related to specialisation of production needs in the business. Continuous

training must have initial training as a point of reference. Educational and vocational training must cover the operational needs of individual economic activity sectors, which constitutes a link between the general education system and employment.

From experiences of other EU Member States, it is clear that to achieve an effective sectoral approach in education and training the creation of a system with three points of action is needed:

- the monitoring and identification of training needs for changes and new specialisations in the labour market;
- the analysis of job positions that include these specialisations;
- accreditation of the trainee's abilities, training itself and the structures that provide it.

What is needed in Greece is a structure which will examine and analyse the changes taking place in the working process, in the internal business environment, as bases on which to identify learning processes, accredit skills and create training packages and programmes. What is missing is a mechanism to connect training with the labour market. Hence the need for EKESEK to:

- make the link between production needs and the supply of abilities by education and training systems;
- activate the connection between training and employment on the basis of specialized packages that will respond to current as well as future needs;
- make the connection between initial and continuous training which can be achieved through programmes with a common point of reference;
- ensure continuous monitoring and evaluation of changes in the content/profiles of jobs that come about due to continuous technological change and changes in production structures (forecasting and recording of specialisations in professional fields and sectors, carried out by the National Employment Observatory);
- meet the need for the creation of educational profiles equivalent to the content of job positions. The job profile is of particular importance for new specialisations which are, in many cases, already operating in the labour market either under the name of a similar specialisation or non-formal ly without equivalent professional rights or transferability;
- make the link between training and accreditation of competences.

The specialized centres (EKESEK) aim to ensure vocational training is matched to the needs of internal and external labour markets through the specification of forms and levels of training. At the same time, products produced by the centres (professional profiles, training packages, technical packages and training of trainers material) will be subject to approval by EKEPIS and will support the implementation of the national accreditation system of continuous vocational training.

Continuous vocational training is a direct tool for development only if it is connected with the needs, not the labour market in general, but of specific job positions, for which particular training packages must be developed. In terms of the Greek labour market, it is envisaged that the centres should cover training design on a sectoral level, as follows:

- (a) agricultural production;
- (b) industry – manufacturing – vehicle sector;
- (c) constructions – big works – green areas;
- (d) services (management – accounting – computer science);
- (e) environment – culture;
- (f) tourism;
- (g) trade (wholesale – retail) – transport;
- (h) health professions;
- (i) social welfare professions.

There is also a need for an EKESEK with a horizontal (trans-sectoral) character, to cover the needs for accreditation and training packages for job positions and professions common to a large number of branches of economic activity.

2.2.1.3. Sectoral methodologies

No one disagrees that the social partners should be main participants in the process of developing standards, although there is some reservation on the part of businesses as to the role of the State (relevant ministry for the sector and education ministry for the training packages): some feel this is more of a hindrance than a help to progress and that the State role should be limited to providing accreditation, not interfering in the process that leads to it. Others feel universities have a role to play in helping develop standards, although reservation is also expressed concerning: (a) the lack of connection between what is taught at university and the changing needs of the labour market; and, (b) the potential conflict of interests since universities have a vested interest in maintaining a system which recognises formal learning.

In 70% of cases, those who work on the basis of experience are in the lowest paid jobs. It is with this group that the Greek State is concerned in terms of recognition of non-formal learning, not so much with the higher level employees. This explains the focus on technical and sectoral competences. There is not significant interest in the issue from a broader perspective, i.e. to include tacit knowledge and non-technical abilities.

There is some concern about the level of detail the standards will go into. It is a question of striking a balance between simplicity and complexity. Too much detail could actually obstruct the system, while too little could prevent the system from having the needed credibility and ability to reflect the individual. The system needs to be dynamic to allow

continuous updating regarding new know-how, by sector, and flexible regarding levels within sectors, such that routes to move from one to another are easily accessible.

Specification of job profiles for every specialisation and level that must be accredited constitutes the basis on which the whole procedure, with tripartite participation, must be built. Continuous monitoring and adaptation to the contemporary situation is vital.

With the exception of some regulated professions, overall recognition of non-formal learning is not evidenced through legislation but through practical recruitment practices, which does not in itself constitute a 'system'. There are a number of regulated professions many of which allow for the acquisition of a professional licence on the basis (at least partially and in some cases totally) of proven experience. In many cases, the sectoral trade associations have participated – together with the relevant ministry and/or public service – in the determination of the criteria for recognition of non-formal learning.

Since as early as 1934, experience in a profession has been able to receive formal accreditation, thus allowing people to exercise it on the basis of experience. A legal framework was created by the Ministry of Industry at that time (and is still valid) allowing the generation of presidential decrees and supplementary clauses to regulate a number of production-related secondary sector professions. The motivation from the workers point of view was to secure and regulate their profession and from the State point of view to provide social protection and safety. On this basis, a legal framework was created for a significant number of professions since then, such as:

- **Car mechanics**

For the supervision and execution of maintenance and repairs of cars, motorbikes and motorcycles, a special professional licence is necessary. To obtain a licence, the candidate must be over 18 and offer some specific skills in accordance with each of 14 specialisations. These skills can be obtained through experience or a formal degree (from an approved technical college or OAED school or OAED intensive courses). Practical experience acquired during studies or past work experience can be taken into account (provided eight or more years have not passed in between). Experience abroad can be recognised provided it is well documented and evidenced. The examination committee includes two technical employees of the same specialisation and a representative of the professional union as an observer. There are at least three examination periods per year and candidates are examined in theory and practice by the committee of the specific specialisation. After successful completion of the exams, the candidate can obtain a licence. Each one of the 14 specialisations has its own experience requirements according to the significance and potential risk to the health and wellbeing of society. For example, a maintenance technician with a primary school certificate and 10 years of experience can secure a 'C class licence. Someone with the same skills and 11 more years of experience can have an 'A class licence to exercise fully the profession.

- **Plumbers (hydraulic)**

The levels of professional licence are: assistant plumber and plumber. The requirements for an assistant plumber's licence are a TEL/TES degree (N. 1566/85) and experience (750 daily wages) or evidence of at least three years experience obtained after 15 years of age. The plumber's licence (' A class) requires a TEL degree and experience (750 daily wages) or TES degree and experience (1 000 daily wages) or lower plumber school degree and experience (125 daily wages). For ' B class licences: TEL degree and experience (2 000 daily wages) or TES degree and experience (2 250 daily wages) are required. Therefore, the profession of plumber is in principle not available to those with non-formal learning. However, in practice, 90% of those exercising the profession do so on the basis of non-formal learning

- **Barbers – hairdressers**

To become a barber, a TES degree and four months practice or four years experience as an assistant barber is needed. To be a hairdresser, a TES degree and between one and seven years of experience is required. To become a hairdresser A, four year's experience and a hairdressing permit is needed.

- **Electricians (installers)**

Electricians can be experienced workers without a degree, workers with experience or graduates of higher schools. Requirements for the acquisition of the licence are: certification of experience from employers, approved by the foreman, on the basis of the official opinion provided by the union, including details of the specific specialisation that the candidate worked on and the length of time. After submitting the necessary papers, the candidate takes exams. The types of licence (level) are issued according to the results of the examination. Workers with non-formal learning alone need 11 years of previous work to participate in the exams and receive a permit to establish power of 15kw (max.). After five years, on the basis of this permit, exams can be taken to obtain a permit for 40 kw. Establishments of higher power cannot be executed by those with non-formal learning. With a degree from a lower technical school and five years experience for the 15 kw category, or eight years for the 40 kw category, a person can obtain the equivalent permits after examination. If someone has a degree, years of experience are reduced to one year for 15 kw, plus three more years for the 40 kw and five more years for a 100 kw permit.

Other examples of professions where people with non-formal learning have the opportunity to accredit their competence and exercise a profession on the basis of experience, without formal qualifications, are:

- **stoker – head stoker:** the stoker requires five years experience; the head stoker 12 years;
- **welder (elec. – oxyg.):** one year experience for a second class licence and four years for a first class licence;
- **machine maintenance:** C licence with 10 years of experience, B class with 15 years and A class with 21 years. All candidates must have a primary school certificate;

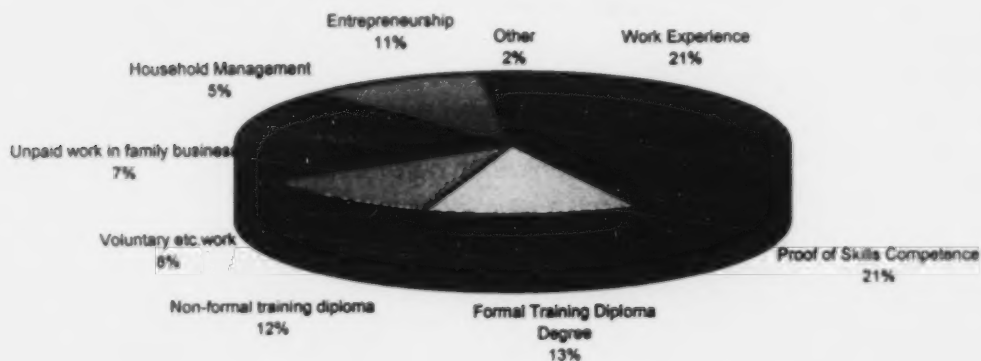
- **establisher – machine designer:** non-formal learners who have completed the second year of secondary school and have 15 years experience can obtain a machine designer licence. Someone with a primary school certificate and 21 years of experience can obtain an establisher's licence;
- **machine operator (technical works, thermal or electrological):** for this licence, the number of social security stamps of the candidate counts as experience: 600 stamps are equivalent to a D class licence, 750 to a C class, 900 to a B class and 1 000 stamps to an A class;
- **operator and assistant operator of film projection machines:** for candidates without qualifications, experience (in projection chambers) of 20 months is required for both licences.

The latter provides a case directly connected with the issue of the transfer of skills – from profession to profession and place to place. In the particular profession of a film operator, electrician degree holders with three to six months experience (in projection chambers) can obtain an assistant operator's licence, and with nine to 16 months experience, the operator's licence (*profession → profession*). Greek citizens with a foreign licence of film machine operation can obtain the Greek operator's licence after taking examinations (*abroad → Greece*).

2.2.1.4. Company-led methodologies

Businesses operate recruitment practices that demonstrate emphasis on a combination of methods that take into account non-formal learning, placing relatively little emphasis on formal certificates/degrees:

Asked which factors lay most importance on in recruitment, employers said:



Employers and enterprises value non-formal learning. They often assess this through testing of knowledge and skills over a trial period. Depending on the sector, a new worker is engaged for a period (e.g. two weeks in hotel trade, two months in business consulting) in order to show his/her skills and competences in the particular post. This on-the-job testing period enables observation, evaluation and assessment of the person in his/her specific position of work.

Individual evaluation systems of employees are operated in some big businesses with respect to specific terms of the job profile and business contracts of work. These businesses are often international or cooperating with other European partner associations, adopting their methods. Some of the larger employers in Greece operate company-led systems of recognising non-formal learning: for example, the General Food Company (Barba Stathis) S.A. applies a series of standards organised under 12 thematic groups, including tacit com-petences, such as decision-making, reactions to different situations, to evaluate employees.

Current methods are not enough because they are piecemeal, fragmented and not part of a structured system. They only apply to technically-based branches and professional areas. There are many more professions and horizontal skill areas (trans-sectoral), including a range of tacit competences, where non-formal learning needs to be recognised.

2.2.2 Links between initiatives related to assessment and overall qualifications standards

2.2.2.1. Problems of equivalence

Much work still needs to be done to develop links between methodologies of assessing non-formal learning and qualification standards for diplomas or degrees awarded in the framework of the formal education and training system.

The OEEK working group attempted to develop clear definitions of the levels of non-formal learning and the accreditation that could be awarded. Frameworks of reference for levels 1-3 were the formal system of training and education in combination with the framework of Law 2009/92, SEDOC tables, the second directive, the white and green papers and the corresponding texts of Greek legislation (see 2.2.1.1.). The working group concluded that titles obtained through such an accreditation process would be equal to those from formal education and training, as far as *exercising professional rights* was concerned. However, they felt that in no way could these titles have the same value or power as formal ones in relation to *access to the educational system*. In other words, the vocational training titles proposed by the working group set out professional knowledge and accredit the latter only, not educational level or title.

Another problem of equivalence is the relation between the different levels of title and professional permits issued by the responsible Ministries which rest on collective work agreements developed over time. The professional equivalence of accredited vocational

training titles with the *level* of permit must be established by law to avoid any contradictions. It is predicted (in the framework of wider cooperation on these issues) that the social partners will gradually adapt their company/sectoral/national working agreements in such a way as to take into account the levels as well as the requirements/skills for a particular job position, ensuring that ultimately there will not be contradictions.

2.2.2.2. Difficulties of lifelong accreditation

The OEEK working group also considered in some depth the issue of lifelong accreditation of new professional skills and transfer from one level of training to another. The integration of lifelong continuous training requires structures which will strengthen the ongoing accreditation and reaccreditation of new dynamic competences and more general abilities. The working group concluded that social and professional competences gained over time must be able to be accredited at a higher level, even if this means the current education and training system must develop a new system and standards (titles, levels) to keep up with reality.

Such a system of accreditation would be useful to any person who needs or wants to have their new competences accredited and thereby reach a higher level of title, through mechanisms of recognition and transformation of experience in specified, standardised (training-level) equivalences. In this way, the accreditation system would obtain a dynamic, long-term usefulness.

2.2.2.3. Building links

Recognition and accreditation of abilities and skills acquired through non-formal learning have as a key aim raised employment opportunities, which in turn will improve the operation of the labour market. Accreditation of abilities rests on job profiles. Accreditation of training rests on the content of the course which may or may not be closely related to the real needs of the job market. In fact, there is often a huge gap between what the labour market wants and what the education and training system provides (hence unemployment of graduates).

Education/training packages must be developed from job profiles. This work needs to be done at the level of the education and training system first of all. Beyond formal qualifications, the labour market today demands executive capacity with the ability to operate in circumstances and conditions characterised by change and uncertainty, the need to take responsibility, to adapt and act quickly and so on. The education and training system in Greece does not cater for these needs. Until it does, there will always be a gap between what the education and training system provides and what the labour market needs.

In this respect, participation by labour market actors in the development and monitoring of standards is key and the creation of standards on the basis of job profiles is crucial. Training packages by branch/sector/specialism must be accredited in accordance with the needs of the job market in that particular branch as well as horizontally for non-sectorally

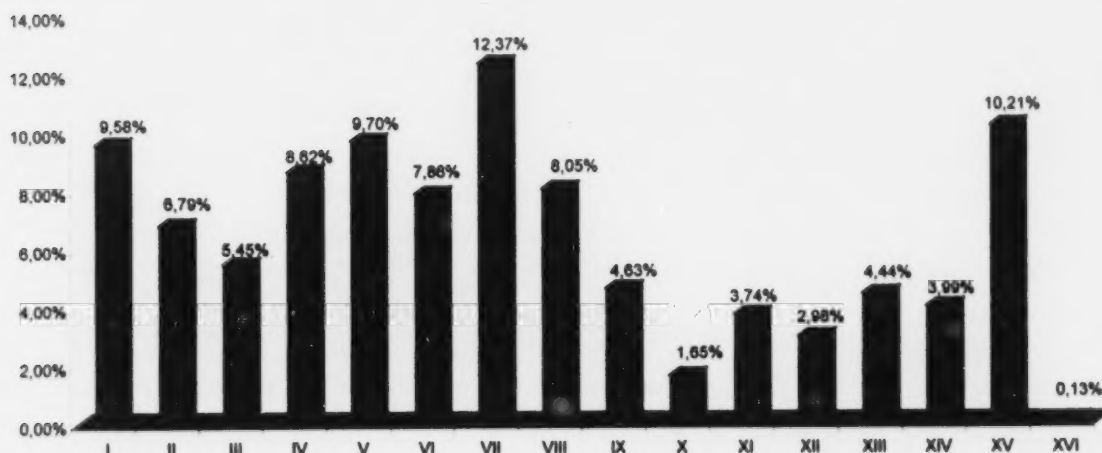
specific core skills. The system must be flexible and dynamic in order to change with the times.

What are the views of key bodies?

- **Employers**

Examinations are considered to be the most common way of linking non-formal learning levels with formal standards. Evaluation takes place in practice by companies making assessments and comparison in house. Links between levels of non-formal learning and formal standards require the development of a testing system (theoretical and practical) on a national or sectoral level, on the initiative of the social partners. Skills must be recognised in a broad way in the framework of changes in the organization of work and bearing in mind the quality of service factor. It could lead to a kind of portfolio or competence assessment report for each worker, recognised by both employers and employees. Prerequisite to making the link is the specification of levels of formal diploma and degree systems in terms of competences (what/how/how much) in the relevant occupation/specialisation.

Asked how abilities from formal and non-formal learning can be assessed
in a common framework, employers said:



I.	degree-diploma.
II.	letters of recommendation.
III.	written assignments and researches.
IV.	certificates from 'on-the-job' training.
V.	portfolio- cv (of formal and non-formal skills.
VI.	interview.
VII.	skills and abilities presentation.
VIII.	level of education.
IX.	examination- test.
X.	certificates of an equivalent course or job.
XI.	hobbies and trips.
XII.	social activities.
XIII.	independent reading.
XIV.	volunteer activities.
XV.	laboratories of professional growth.
XVI.	past work experience.

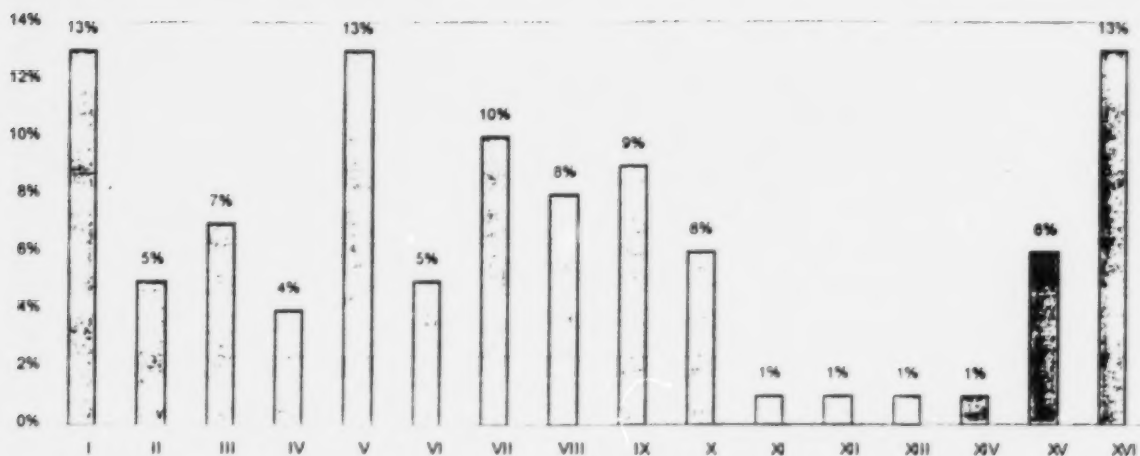
• Employee unions

Assessment of the value of non-formal learning is mainly based on the demonstration of skills and competences in the context of work. The professional profile and level of an individual response, in formal and non-formal skills, to that profile could constitute the connecting link between non-formal abilities and the levels set out by the formal diploma and degree system. There must be an analytical description of abilities according to knowledge and skills of each profession, by hierarchical level, to develop an integrated system of identification and recognition, regardless of the means by which the competences were acquired. For this reason, the distinction between training and professional titles is vital.

• Sectoral associations

The link demands, by sector, the creation of special schools and programmes, modular structures for intensive training in order that non-formal learners can access training units to complete their skill base (if necessary), to achieve a title of studies.

Asked how abilities acquired by non-formal and formal means could be brought together in a common framework, professional sectorial associations replied:



- **Ministries**

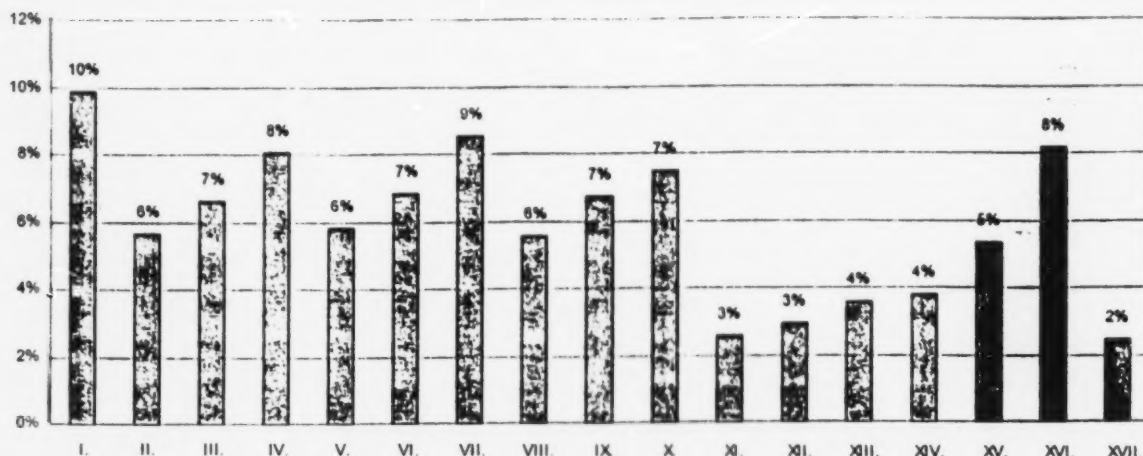
Non-formal learning (continuous vocational training, upskilling, adaptation of abilities and competences) must be focused around one credible core of abilities which come from a formal learning framework.

- **Educational bodies**

In order that recognition of non-formal learning can facilitate access to the education system, acquired skills must be evaluated for equivalencies to levels of formal training and transferred in the form of credits. However, until formal training programmes are modularly structured, there can be no correlation.

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Asked how abilities acquired in formal and non-formal contexts could be recognized
in a common framework, organizations replied:



2.2.3. Systems: sizes, sectors, target groups

In the largest industrial sectors in Thessaloniki county (textiles, metals, food and beverages), which employ 70% of the working population, 50% are working on the basis of non-formal learning.

According to information from 20 sectoral professional associations (representing over 5 000 members, plus 20 associations in the trade sector), on average two-thirds are practising their profession based on non-formal skills:

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Sector	Formal %	Non-formal %
Textiles	20	80
Marble production	10	90
Bakers	5	95
Gifts, popular art and hand craft	15	85
Knitwear	30	70
Ready to wear clothing	10	90
Electricians	80	20
Photographers	10	90
Union of Greek wine	100	-
Photocopies	-	100
Leather processing	-	100
Refrigerator repairer	70	30
Plumbers (hot pipe)	35	65
Car mechanics	90	10
Silver/goldsmith	85	15
Professionals/traders	40	60
Opticians	100	-
Needle work	20	80
Silkscreening	30	70
Watchmakers	-	100

Who has non-formal learning? In a broad and real sense, everyone is in an ongoing lifelong learning process. But in particular, the national organization for employment and the labour force (OAED) and the general workers confederation (GSEE) estimate that the majority of the labour force (50-55%) are working without certified formal skills. These include:

- people in work for 20 years or more building their careers in a sector thanks to their performance and experience without having qualifications;
- workers on low salaries. Non-formal learning is recognised only in non-formal relations of labour, i.e., the ability is evaluated but it is not remunerated;
- technical craft and manual trades;
- most self-employed people and entrepreneurs, whose experience is very difficult to identify and assess;

- agriculture and stock/cattle breeding, construction works and quarries;
- foreign languages, computer users and musicians;
- trade and repairs;
- unpaid work at home, in family businesses, voluntary and political activity.

In general, non-formal learning is 'recognised' in an unofficial way (employer and customer attitude). People with many years of experience are recognised by the market and the employer. In an official way, only workers with skills legally recognised in the specific profession/specialisation (job profile) are recognised, based on collective labour agreements, and in a few cases workers in big businesses where integrated systems of personnel evaluation are implemented.

2.3. Evaluation and experience

The key question is how far a system of identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning is accepted. It is something new, bringing information to a variety of interested parties who will attach a 'value' to that information. It is a question of developing a credible and legitimate system in a particular country, region or sector, used by labour market actors, whereby recognition of non-formal learning can add value to that already carried by formal learning and certification. The key issue is the development of standards and a methodology on which assessment can be based.

2.3.1. Methodologies – Can they reflect the uniqueness of learning? Are they able to identify and assess what they intend to? Proposals

It is important to consider the question of quality in developing and applying methods to assess and recognize non-formal learning. How accurate is it to give a picture of something without any information about its circumstances or environment? This is one of the drawbacks of using electronic means – it is simple, quick and internationally accessible, but it probably does not provide the detail or feedback on an individual level that is required for a quality understanding of the competences and abilities acquired by an individual, through a range of non-formal learning contexts.

Methodologies tailored to individualised assessment of non-formal learning are the most useful and only this way can people's competences really be evaluated and accredited. But, at the same time, this is the most complex and least cost-effective approach. The question of 'who pays' and how much they are prepared to pay thus influences the methodology used. In terms of the standards currently being developed in the context of the pilot vocational training planning centres (EKESEK), the intention is tripartite financing (employers, employees and State).

Business associations assess that 70% of SMEs (which are over 90% of all businesses) in Greece, seek personnel with a complex combination of competences and at the same time partial/specialised knowledge of ICT (information, communication technology). The development and integration of new 'job profiles' in the context of the standards and system of recognition currently being developed, must take account of new and changing needs if the system is to be valid and useful to employers, i.e., systems and standards must be dynamic.

Open questions remain concerning the way in which testing will take place in relation to the new standards. The Ministry of Labour plans the creation of a national register of examiners and trainers and a monitoring system for examiners and evaluators. Procedures for testing will be decentralised with a central awarding and accreditation unit.

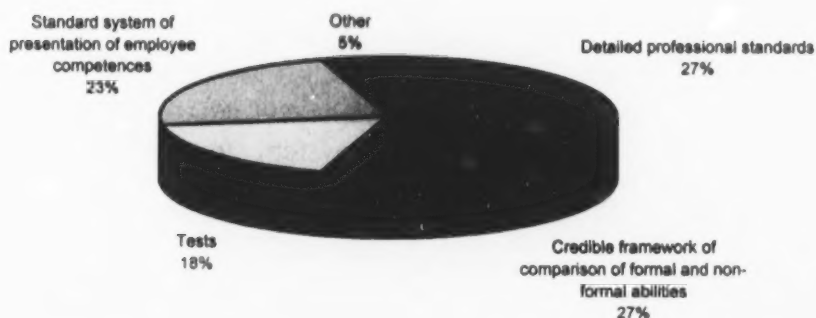
What are the views of key bodies?

- **Ministries**

Performance must be audited according to the skill area/competences to be recognised. Criteria should be created according to the real requirements of available jobs on the labour market. Performance assessment towards accreditation by various means (examinations, interviews, etc.), based on criteria according to the time period in which knowledge was obtained and the process of learning, (apprenticeship on the job, unpaid work). At present, recognition processes are based only on the examination of formal documents.

• Employers

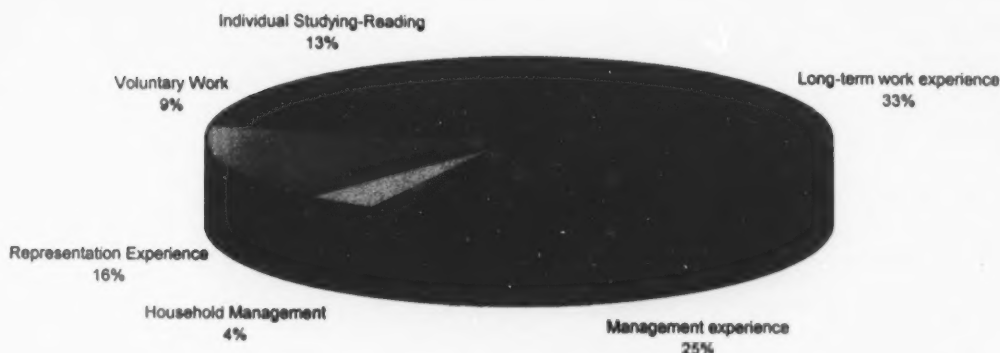
Employers indicated the following key components to any acceptable methodology for recognition on non-formal learning:



Recommendation letters from previous employers should be detailed and reference made to the ability of a person to respond successfully in the framework of an assignment/task. This competence must be included in the framework of quality targets in relation to the professional environment. Local committees could be made up of people belonging to various professional areas to monitor in-house over a period of time, the way someone operates in the working environment and his/her performance of duties. In a more structured approach, committees including representatives of employees, employers, the education and training system and government, should be formed, to carry out:

- (a) specification of professional activities according to the size of sector, profession, specialisation, location;
- (b) professional skills specification (dynamic, transprofessional, specialist);
- (c) goal-setting and creation of programmes, specification and training of trainers, laboratories with equipment and adoption of methodologies of alternative training;
- (d) implementation and evaluation of training work;
- (e) certification of the quality of the results in relation to the specification of the professional activity.

Asked which sources of non-formal learning they considered most important, employers said:



- **Employment services**

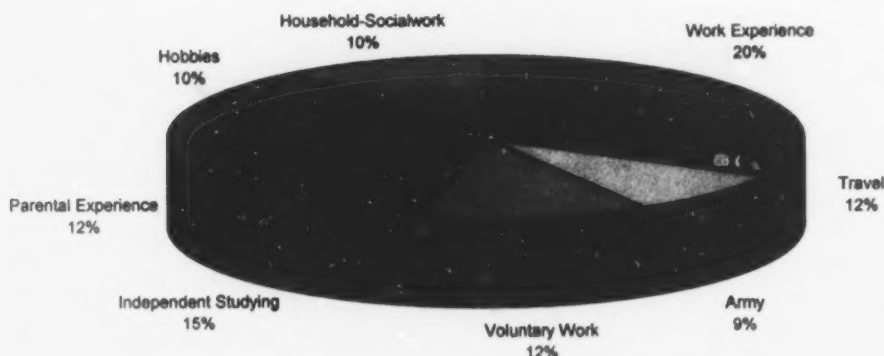
National standards, by sector, must be created, constituted by modules and on different levels, to enable any form of formal or non-formal learning to be recognised. On this basis, implementation of the acquired skills in relation to the labour market needs or the area for which they are destined (competence-based testing).

- **Sectoral associations**

The social and professional profile of the person and professional recognition in the market are 'proof' of competence. How do you test this? Work effectiveness: how someone performs at work; the quality that he/she produces; the way he/she works and the results; productivity. A more traditional way is examination of abilities by mixed committees of the Ministry of National Economy and the equivalent sectoral association and public service for each case. 'The best evidence of skill and knowledge is the professional position that someone holds.'

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Asked which sources of non-formal learning they considered most relevant,
sectoral associations said:



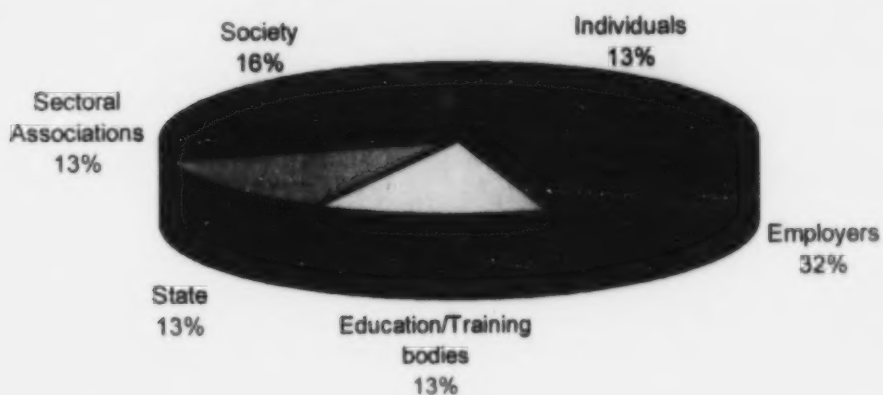
2.3.2. *De facto* support and recognition of existing systems

Seven out of 10 SMEs in Greece (with up to 30 employees on average), seek personnel with a combination of abilities. A system of recognition of non-formal learning is vital to assist businesses in recruitment processes and back up the *de facto* recognition they already give to this, mainly through:

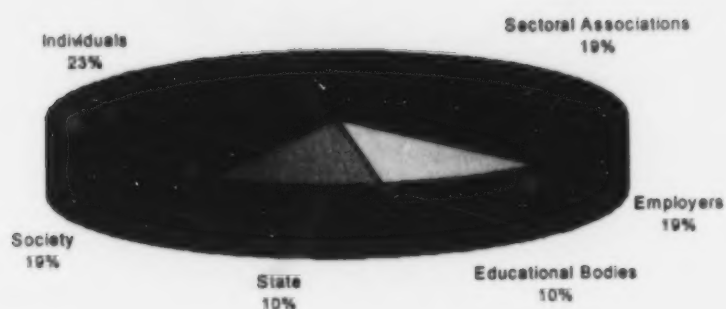
- (a) recruitment on the basis of criteria that make minimal reference to formal qualifications;
- (b) salary increases (beyond the legal required by collective agreements);
- (c) upgrades/promotion in the company.

How far are existing methods credible and accepted by the various partners?

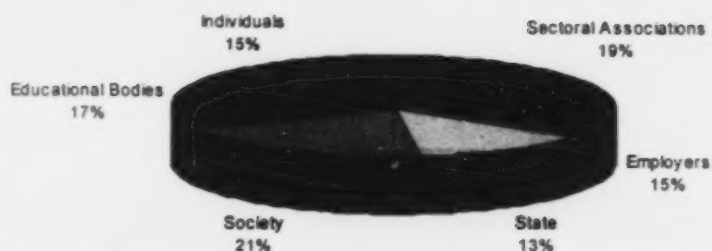
Employers said:



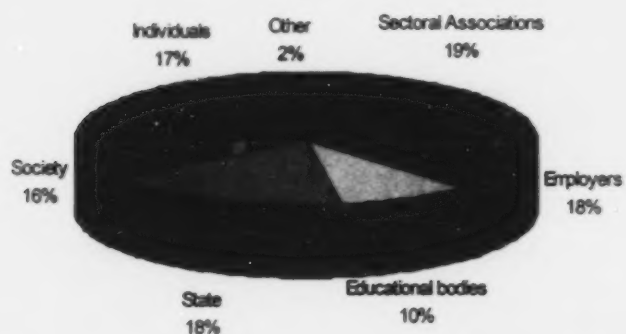
Employees said:



Sectoral associations said:

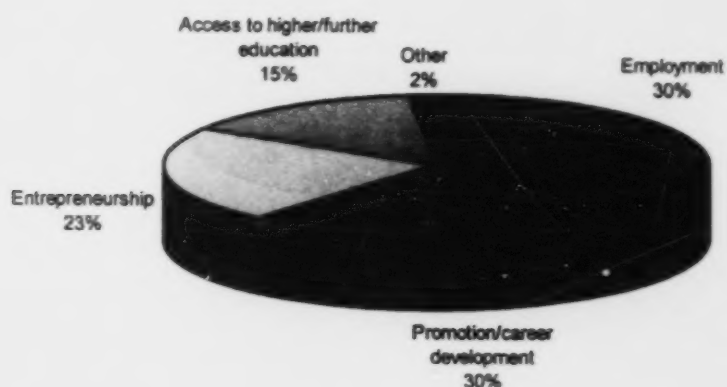


Employment/education organizations and ministries said:



Asked how do existing methods of recognition enable people with non-formal learning to access the labour market of further training,

Employers said:

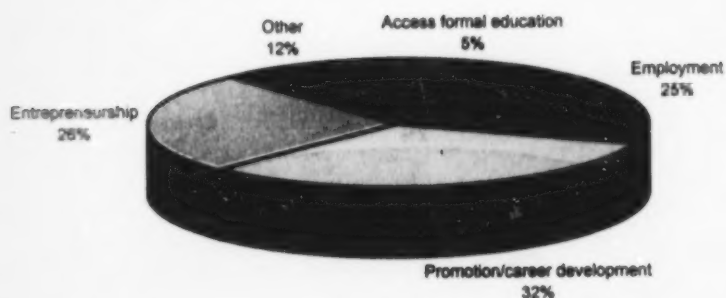


Employees said:

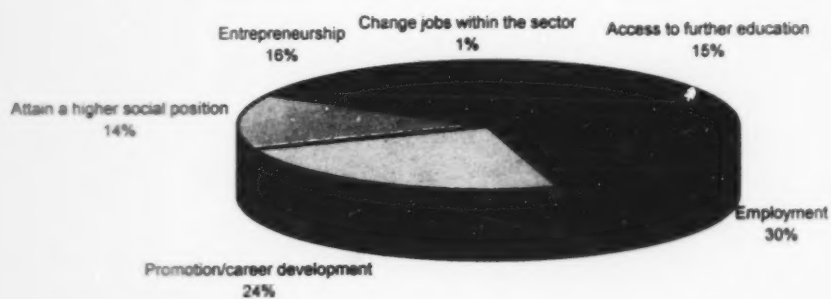


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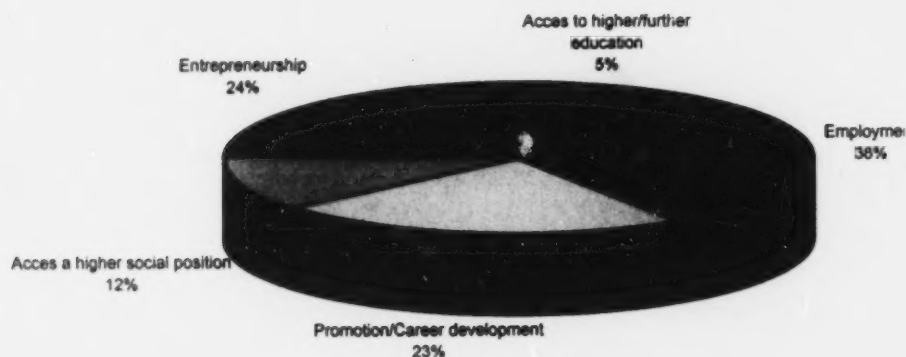
Sectoral associations said:



Employment/education organizations and ministries said:



Individual/non-formal learners said:



2.3.3 Transfer and mobility

Businesses should be obliged, in the context of standards being developed, to ensure their employees reach a certain level of learning in terms of core skills. Otherwise, there are significant problems of transferability. If skills and standards related to them apply only to a specific sector, then even accredited they are non-transferable. Employers must be given some incentives by the State to give workers opportunities to acquire and accredit skills (core).

Thus, there needs to be some obligatory core skills standards and employers should have a role in helping workers develop and test for these. For example, there are cases in other EU countries where businesses give all their workers accreditation in these. It is key for an EU body to be involved in the process such that the standards and certification can be transferable across Europe.

There is no structured system for transferring abilities from level to level and from area to area, just subjectively and experientially. This transferability can happen only if they are specified in the basic professional competences as core skills. Transprofessional characteristic competences, differentiated according to each level of practising the profession, level of autonomy and responsibility.

Non-formal abilities can be transferred but not in a direct way. For example, caring for children at home constitutes an ability which can be used at a childcare centre but needs work to be transformed into a professional competence. Experience in bookkeeping cannot lead to formal professional accounting without the acquisition of theoretical knowledge which can be certified through exams. The communication abilities of a salesman are not equal to the abilities of communication that a personnel supervisor has but they can be adapted and developed.

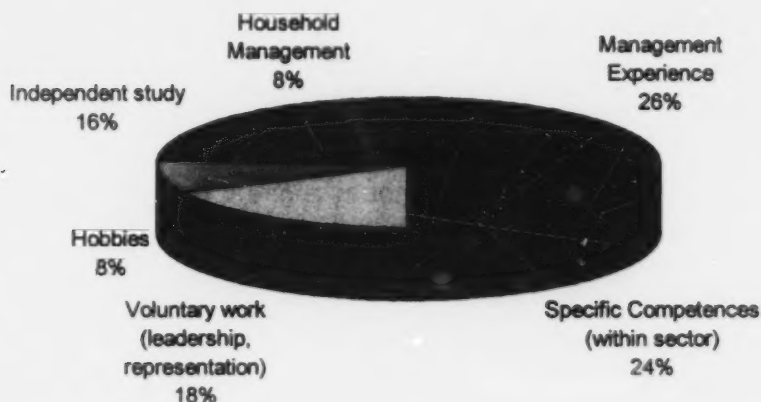
Transfer can be achieved only across work sectors that have similarity or across sectors if skills are core, or from non-formal to formal situations with comparable skill bases. For example:

- production line workers,
- dressmakers with experiential knowledge engaged by clothing industries,
- a person occupied in a children's summer camp,
- foreign languages, market experience, computer experience, public relations,
- from knitting to textiles,
- from household cook to a small tavern,
- from textiles to a small factory,
- from household management to agrotourism.

And tacit knowledge, such as:

- management competences from one area can be transferred to another. This is equally valid for the transportation of competences from home (human resource management, time management, etc.), to work. Leadership abilities as well as team-building competences can be transported from volunteer work;
- the approach in order to produce a result;
- critical thinking; an enlarged way of thinking;
- discipline, cleanliness, respect for the work area.

Asked which non-formal abilities could be transferred most easily, employers said:



2.4. Qualification standards and the link between formal/non-formal learning

Nothing is yet standardised at national level in Greece in the area of qualification profiles and standards. In the context of the third community support framework, goals have been set for the accreditation of structures, training programmes and trainers, as well as qualifications and competences. This process should be completed by the year 2000. At political level, the Ministries of Labour and Employment and their respective bodies (OEEK, EKEPIS, OAED), are in dialogue on this issue under the supervision of the Ministerial Council. The result will be a master plan, ready in the year 2000, which will include a national system of qualifications' profiles and standards.

Currently, in Greece there is no comprehensive national system of qualifications' standards or profiles. The basis for this system is being created and tested through pilot operations in certain sectors by OAED centres for vocational training planning (EKESEK), taking elements of the UK NVQ system as an example. The aim is to generate job profiles and goal-oriented training packages by specialism and level of knowledge. These will be established with the participation of sectoral bodies and social partners. For example, in the case of different hotel industry posts, the respective unions of hoteliers and hotel employees will take part, as well as the national sectoral body responsible (in this case, the National Tourism Board).

Job profiles will be established at different levels for each specific profession and area of specialisation- basic knowledge, specialist knowledge, other know- how. From these profiles, different packages will be developed stating skills levels and competences required for each level. This will provide the framework for a national system of qualification standards and profiles, recognition and accreditation of professional skills and knowledge, in which initial and continuous training as well as non-formal learning, will be taken into account with clear equivalencies between formal learning and years of experience. This system of accrediting skills will be open to all, whereby importance is attached to whether and to what level skills have been acquired, not to the way in which the skills were acquired.

How will skills be tested? These details are yet to be resolved but the current system applied to the accreditation of knowledge on the basis of IEK training programmes might be taken into account where there is a theoretical and a practical test in every case and where the examining body is a tripartite committee of social partners.

The IEK system is legally regulated training established since 1994. In the IEK system, there is a training regulation for each course specifying the knowledge and skills required for certification, analysed into a job profile, duties and tasks, based on labour market requirements. This system is not part of the initial educational system and has the flexibility to adapt to different labour market circumstances over time and space (region), although in practice it functions rather rigidly. The IEK system combines theoretical course content with actual skills, the former is tested through a basic course content test applied nationally at examination centres throughout the country and the latter through practical skills tests applied regionally.

IEK is a positive system in that the social partners approve it and take part in the examination process. It is important in being a pioneer in collaboration between the social partners. One of the weaknesses of the IEK system is that it does not go into the issue of how well skills are mastered, and in this sense it is only partly standardised as a system. Furthermore, although the examining committee is made up of social partners, these people are not trained so there are no common quality standards or benchmarks applied on a nationwide basis. It is possible for OEEK (supervisory board of the IEK) to do some work in this area, such as through training for examiners and production of guidelines for quality standards. Finally, in order for workers to have access to the IEK system of qualification standards tests, they have to follow the IEK training course, so it is not actually an open system of access to skills accreditation. For the most part (excluding the practical skills tests), it is a test of how well the student has absorbed the theoretical material of the training course.

However, when the third EU directive comes into force, Greece – like other Member States – will be obliged to develop and implement a comprehensive set of qualification standards and profiles whereby skills and competences can be recognised regardless of the means by which they have been acquired.

2.4.1. Validation and recognition of qualifications and competences

The Leonardo 'VALID' project, in which representatives of the social partners in Greece are participants (GSEE and GSEVEE), considers how far social partners contribute to the recognition of competences and qualifications and whether solutions found in one country could be transferable to another. In the European discussion paper² produced for the social partners, some individual examples are referenced from the Greek situation:

Fitting qualifications into the in-company qualification system: In the cosmetics sector, a collective agreement was negotiated in 1996, whereby the parties agreed to form a consultative committee of experts from trade unions and employers to study the issues of future qualifications and their impact on compensation.

The importance of qualifications for the assessment of jobs: The Bank of Greece uses a system based on the concept of comprehensive involvement of employees where the underlying principle is the bank's duty to upgrade the qualifications of its employees and the obligation of the latter to undergo training. Training activities are evaluated by a joint management-staff training council, assessing progress from the point of view of the enterprise and the employee, as well as the quality of the training methods and providers.

New concepts of recognition and validation – continuing training and qualification: Based on the principle of 'total quality management', Sarantis SA (cosmetics company controlling 40% of domestic market) organises problem and job-orientation discussion and training seminars geared to improve task performance. Basic wages paid on the basis of collective sectoral agreements are added to, through bonuses for improved performance

² 'Validation and recognition of competences and qualifications: European discussion paper for the social partners'. Heidemann, W. (Hans Bockler-Stiftung, Germany) & Kruse, W. (Landesinstitut Sozialforschungsstelle).

after attendance of these training/discussion forums. It would be valuable for the social partners to take up these innovative examples of in-house continuing training practices in order to place them on the agenda of negotiations and to broaden their application.

The enterprise as a learning organisation: Training and learning activities in the Bank of Piraeus take place on the basis of a general agreement on human resource development negotiated between the respective trade union and employers association. A pilot project for self-learning was implemented with the aim of improving mobility between the different departments and developing capacity to solve technical problems. Heads of department moderate the learning process. The pilot project grew out of efforts to raise qualification levels and improve staff's daily work performance by in-house training.

2.4.2. OEEK working group

The OEEK working group was set up on the basis of the second directive (9251/92) and was coordinated by the Ministry of Education. The group came to conclusions on the accreditation of training, not of skills or competences, which is rooted in the labour market and belongs to the Ministry of Labour.

The working group made attempts to match educational standards/formal certification with professional competences, seeking equivalencies of the professional competences of workers in the education system. However, since the qualifications that reflect the educational system are often incompatible with real job market competences, attempts to make the connection between the two was in vain. In future, as in the case of the current political dialogue in this area, work should be coordinated mainly or equally (with the Ministry of Education) by the Ministry of Labour, such that the context is the economy and not the education system *per se*.

In the context of the working group, more attention needed (and still needs) to be paid to 'soft' skills, of a high or low order. That is to say the skills developed by a worker on the basis of mental processes he/she has used in the context of work experience over time, that ultimately save time and money for the business. These skills cannot be easily evaluated and tested in a standardised fashion but require a more individualised approach such as job shadowing.

The experience of the working group was useful in terms of raising awareness, developing methods for accreditation and promoting collaboration between the social partners on this issue. It opened up the path to accreditation and led to current discussions on recognition of skills and competences. The first work being done on the accreditation of skills/competences is the qualification profiles work currently being piloted by the EKESEK.

2.4.3. Relevance of the 1934 legal framework

The 1934 legal framework was laid down by the Ministry of Industry defining the professional obligations and rights of a significant number of workers in various branches of industry. This was the first case of professional recognition and it continues to exist today as a basis in industry on which presidential decrees can and have been built (e.g.,

for sectoral recognition of specific professions). Law 2009/92 complements this legal framework defining professional rights at levels below that of IEK training, including self-taught people.

These two legal provisions provide the framework of reference for professional obligations and rights, and thus they also define how people can develop and move up within their professional field. On the other hand, there are collective agreements between employers and employees which define payment levels. The two systems are not always compatible.

The recognition of non-formal learning is loosely tackled in the context of the legal framework referred to, in that professional development and progress is based in some cases on experience. What is omitted from the current framework is the recognition of ongoing, continuous training, with a few exceptions (e.g. hot-pipe plumbers, dyeing processes for hairdressers, etc.), most of them related to health and wellbeing of the public, in which cases the candidate must complete a public institution training course.

3. CONCLUSIONS

In the context of a system to identify, assess and recognize non-formal learning whereby standards and profiles will be developed, there must also be a modular credit-based approach to training opportunities such that people can access training only in those areas where they have knowledge gaps to reach efficiently the necessary level for accreditation of a particular competence/specialism/profession.

3.1. Motives: why recognise non-formal learning?

- To reduce unemployment, increase flexibility and work supply.
- Social justice: those with non-formal skills should be equal to those who have recognised degrees in the contexts of employment and access to further training.
- Better absorption of those with non-formal learning by the labour market.
- Increase in productivity and the potential of the labour force.
- Specialisation.
- Establishment of a professional licence system.

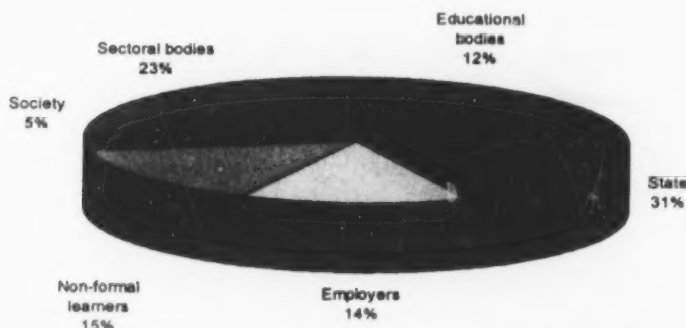
3.2. Methods: how to build a system of recognition?

- Criteria: employment achievements/experience/training techniques/attitude skills-degrees/ certificates.
- Criteria: according to the needs of each enterprise or job position the establishment of minimum and maximum work experience required.
- Divide professional profile into sectors of knowledge, competences, skills.
- Final formation of the system before testing on the labour market.
- Creation of special schools and modular courses that can offer only what is missing for those who have non-formal learning.
- Separate committees to formulate the system and others to implement it.
- Unions could pressurize the government for recognition of non-formal abilities.
- Past work experience certification. Testing of abilities and knowledge.
- Interview - evaluation - testing the employee in relation to the description of the work post and professional development over time.

The process of recognition should be done by an independent body involving social partners (national and sectoral), key actors in the labour market (including local) and educational/training system under the supervision of the Ministry of Employment.

The system should take into account the improvements in the organization of employment, the reality of the labour market and the ongoing changes by sector/profession/work environment/specialisation.

Asked who should participate, to what measure, in the development of a methodology for recognition of non-formal learning all partners (State organizations, social partners, sectoral bodies) replied:



3.3. Results: what expected outcomes?

- Structured dynamic link between training provision and labour market needs.
- New job openings and greater job prospects.
- System of identification and assessment of knowledge, skills, abilities, leading to fuller knowledge of human resource capacity.
- Recognition of abilities according to needs or the specific sectors/jobs with the participation of relevant social partner bodies.
- Development of sectoral profile and credibility.
- Opportunities for development of the person (human resources) inside the enterprise according to their effectiveness.
- Recognition of the ability to gain additional/ongoing professional competences, additionally over time.
- Motivation (individuals) to self-improvement through continuous learning.
- Prosperity in society, the economy and business.

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Identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning in Greece

This report is the Greek contribution to CEDEFOP's project on 'Identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning', which was initiated in 1997. In the three years since its inception, studies in this field have been conducted in a majority of Member States of the European Union (EU) as well as the European Economic Area (EEA), with only Luxembourg and Iceland not yet included. The objectives of the project are:

- to identify to what degree methodologies for the identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning have been introduced in the respective country;
- to identify how methodologies for the identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning are integrated into and supported by existing institutions and systems; and,
- to analyse the political context surrounding the introduction of methodologies and systems.

Greece is one of four Mediterranean countries covered in the project and the report gives a good view of existing work and attitudes to the introduction of methodologies and systems for identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning in the country. Informal and non-formal vocational learning has traditionally been of great importance in Greece. The current report gives a good picture of the efforts to 'tap' this partly invisible and unrecognised reservoir of competences.

Caroline Turner

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